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LETTERS  
ON THE  
DIVINE TRINITY

U. F. BARRETT

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LETTERS

ON

# THE DIVINE TRINITY,

ADDRESSED TO

HENRY WARD BEECHER,

BY

B. F. BARRETT.

"Let our idea of the One Infinite Person be lost, or blurred and dissipated, and there is darkness or lurid twilight on all the landscapes of the mind."—*Sears*.

"Our properly orthodox teachers and churches, while professing three persons, also retain the verbal profession of one person. They suppose themselves really to hold that God is one person. And yet they most certainly do not; they only confuse their understanding, and call their confusion faith."—*Bushnell*.

"At this day, with respect to the Divine Trinity, human reason is bound, like a man handcuffed and fettered in prison, and may be compared to a vestal virgin burned alive for letting out the sacred fire."—*Swedenborg*.

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1860.



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# CONTENTS.

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PREFACE.....	5
--------------	---

## LETTER I.

Tri Personalism and its Logical Consequence.....	9
--	---

## LETTER II.

Where to look for an Image of the Divine Trinity.....	29
---	----

## LETTER III.

Explanation of the Trinity in Man which Images the Trinity in God.....	46
---	----

## LETTER IV.

Further Evidence and Illustrations of the Trinity.....	66
--	----

## LETTER V.

Practical Bearings of the New Doctrine.....	82
---	----

## LETTER VI.

Scripture Confirmation—Meaning of Father and Son.....	100
---	-----

## LETTER VII.

Further Testimony from Scripture—Meaning of the Holy Spirit —Conclusion.....	115
---	-----

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## P R E F A C E.

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The following "Letters" were first published in a monthly religious magazine, ("THE SWEDENBORGIAN,") under the editorial charge of the author, and were continued through seven successive months. The immediate occasion of them, as will appear from the first of the series, was a paragraph in Mr Beecher's interesting, able, and, for the most part, truly admirable sermon on "Understanding God," published in "*The Independent*" of March 31st, 1859. An extended notice of this remarkable sermon appeared in the last June issue of "THE SWEDENBORGIAN"; and some nine or ten pages were therein copied from it with high praise—the Editor commending, as worthy of special admiration, Mr. Beecher's "practical test" by which all our views of the Divine Being are to be tried, and his eloquent advocacy of the distinct personality of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The same notice commenced with the following paragraph: "Among the encouraging religious aspects of the times, are the indications in several quarters that the great Central Doctrine of our religion—the doctrine concerning the Lord—is about to be discussed anew, and to undergo a thorough re-examination." And now, while I write—scarce a month after

the publication of my last "Letter"—I learn, through the newspapers, that an extraordinary degree of interest is being awakened upon this subject of the Trinity; that it is enlisting the attention of some of the most distinguished clergymen in our land, and undergoing a discussion which promises to be more thorough and exhaustive than any to which it has hitherto been subjected. A single issue of a weekly religious paper, just received, tells me of one distinguished D.D., whose recent avowal of his belief in the doctrine of the Trinity "is producing a new discussion of that question"; of another, not less distinguished, who has just delivered a "most effective" discourse upon the subject, for whose publication "a desire has been expressed in many quarters"; of still another, who "is about to publish a work with the title, 'The Fathers of the Primitive Church opposed to the Trinity'"; and of "Lectures on the Trinity," now in the course of delivery by one of the ablest and most popular ministers in our country, which "are to be published by the request of a large number of persons."

Seeing, then, how deep and wide-spread is the interest which this question is awakening among Christians at the present time—understanding, also, how *central* the doctrine is, and how important to any system of theology is a correct view of it—knowing full well, too, how great and numerous are the difficulties with which the old and popular doctrine is embarrassed—and believing that the view presented in these "Letters" will be found, on careful examination, to be at once intelligible, rational, and scriptural, I have no apology to offer for presenting them to the public in their present form—conscious though I am of their many defects. I think they are needed, and will be found useful in this emergency; otherwise I should not publish them. I sincerely hope that, under God,

they may be the means of bringing some humble and struggling souls to a state of rest in regard to this great doctrine, which, more than all others, perhaps, has for centuries confused and perplexed the minds of Christians.

Let me say, also—what I believe has been said elsewhere in this little volume—that these “Letters” are written, not in the interests of any particular sect or party, but in the interests of truth itself and our common Christianity. While thankfully acknowledging my indebtedness, in an especial manner, to one distinguished and chosen servant of the Lord, I wish at the same time to be understood as calling no man Master—for I believe in having but *one* Master—Christ. And feeling a sympathy and fellowship with all His meek and humble followers of whatever name or creed—not doubting but there are some such in every Christian communion—I hope that whatever of God’s truth there is in these “Letters” may win its way to the hearts of all earnest seekers, unimpeded by the force of any prejudice, and unobstructed by the fear of any possible change in their outward church relations.

And should the religious or secular press of the country, or any humble portion of it, deem these “Letters” worthy of notice, it is to be hoped that, for its own credit’s sake as well as for the honor of truth, we shall have something more and better than mere ridicule, or ungenerous aspersions of the character of Swedenborg or the system of theology unfolded in his writings. It is the author’s earnest desire that, if the doctrine of the Trinity as herein set forth be deemed unsound and unscriptural, or the argument by which it is sustained, fallacious, the error of the one and the fallacy of the other may be pointed out in a kind and Christian manner. The fact that every year witnesses a steady increase, among all denomi-

nations, in the number of intelligent Christians who cordially accept this New doctrine for the truth, is a sufficient reason why, if it be *not* true, the error should be exposed by fair and convincing argument, and with friendly and charitable feeling. In our efforts to advance the Master's cause, it is important that we strive never to forget the Master's spirit.

B. F. B.

ORANGE, N. J., January 21, 1860.

LETTERS  
ON  
THE DIVINE TRINITY,  
ADDRESSED TO  
HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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LETTER I.

TRI-PERSONALISM—AND ITS LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE.

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER :

MY DEAR SIR—In addressing to you a few thoughts upon a lofty and momentous theme, I trust you will pardon me for adopting a form which might seem to indicate a closer external intimacy between us than really exists. I will, however, confess to a strong internal drawing towards you—to a sense of a certain spiritual proximity, which may not be particularly flattering to you, but which is none the less real and pleasant to me. I have seldom listened to a sermon by you, that did not awaken within me holier thoughts, and enkindle better feelings, purer desires, and nobler purposes. I have seldom read an article from your pen, from which I did not derive some rational entertainment, intellectual stimulus, or spiritual instruction—frequently all these in happy combination. Your



thoughts seem oftentimes my own, but always dressed in a garb richer far than my poor brain could furnish. It is, therefore, in obedience to a strong internal prompting, and because the epistolary style of address seems to bring you nearer to me, that this style is adopted on the present occasion.

If you have read the June number of the *Swedenborgian*, which was duly mailed to your address, you will have seen how cordially I accept, and how heartily I commend nearly all your sermon on "Understanding God," published in the March 31st issue of the *Independent*. With a single but important exception, which I am now about to notice, that sermon contained what, to me, seemed a lucid and masterly presentation of the truth upon one of the loftiest and most momentous themes which the human mind can contemplate. As to the vastness of the subject—as to the impossibility of fully comprehending or completely measuring the Infinite with our finite capacities—as to the means, or subjective condition, necessary to a right understanding of God—as to the *practical* test to be applied to whatever view of Him is adopted—as to what constitutes the essential and true greatness of the Divine Being, His disinterested and all-embracing love—as to the importance of believing in and worshipping a *personal* God, and that God in human form, and the utter impossibility of conceiving of any being whatsoever "which has not a personality"—as to the supreme and absolute divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the importance of believing in and worshipping Him as the manifested Jehovah,

“ the Way, the Life, the Alpha, the Omega, the First, the Last ”—as to the views upon each and all of these subjects as set forth in your sermon, I have not a word of objection to offer. I accept them cordially as the true Bible views. They are the views, too, which Swedenborg taught with great clearness a hundred years ago, and which are now held by all New Churchmen. So that upon these points, *you* are doctrinally of the New Church, or *I* am orthodox—no matter which way we phrase it.

But there is one point in your sermon—and it seems to me an important one—to which I now desire to call your particular attention ; as I think your views on this point, if I rightly apprehend the meaning of your language, are contrary to the truth, contrary to reason and Scripture, and utterly inconsistent with other parts of your otherwise admirable discourse. I refer to your doctrine of the Divine Trinity as stated in the following exceptionable paragraph :

“ I have only a word to add, and that is with reference to occurrences which have recently taken place. It befel me, not long ago, in writing a reply to a misapprehension of Christian brethren, to state that I had no God but Christ ; that there was an effluence rising from Christ which I was taught to call the Father ; and that there was a still more tenuous effluence which I was taught to call the Holy Spirit. So far as those men who only lie in wait for occasion to find fault, are concerned, I care nothing ; they would find fault under any circumstances. But let me remark to you, my people, that I understand almost literally, what I said to be the truth. It was no slip of pen, nor infelicity of language. If there was error, it was in the sense

and not in the vehicle. I believe that there is God the Father ; I believe that there is God the Son ; and I believe that there is God the Holy Ghost. I believe that these are three beings, with separate and distinct understandings, with separate and distinct conscience, with separate and distinct will. I believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost have a personality so separate that, if the fact of unity had not been announced, the whole world would have been obliged to regard them as three Gods ; that is, to believe in tritheism. I should believe in tritheism did I not find the simple statement in Scripture that these three personal Gods are one. I understand their three-fold personality as much as I understand the existence of three different friends. It is the unity of them that I do not understand. Aforetime, the mystery of the Trinity was, how one could be three. The emphasis was wrongly placed. The New Testament teaches three persons. In my view, the unity of these three is an unexplained but positively stated fact. I believe that it is taught in the New Testament that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God. In reasoning upon this, I do not suppose that they are one in the sense in which they are three, nor that they are three in the sense in which they are one."

Now, although you may agree with me, that it is possible for even polytheists to be good men, yet you would not, I think, seriously maintain that polytheism is true, or that it is a doctrine of the Christian Scriptures. Nor do I believe you would contend that it is a matter of small consequence, whether a Christian believes in one God or in more than one. As God is the centre of the moral universe, so the doctrine concerning Him must be regarded as a cardinal doctrine in every system of theology. All subordinate doctrines

must depend on this, and must be more or less shaped and colored by it. And probably the state of every Christian worshiper, could this matter be thoroughly inquired into or opened up,—his state, I mean, as to clearness and strength of faith, and depth and tenderness of love,—would be found to depend very much on the doctrine which he holds respecting the Object of his worship. If men believe in a proud, haughty, tyrannical God—in one who acts arbitrarily, or from caprice, and always with an eye to his own glory, as unregenerate men act—their moral and spiritual condition cannot fail to be disastrously affected by such belief. Or if they believe in a selfish, partial and vindictive God, the virus of this false belief will distill in bitter drops upon their hearts. And so, too, if they believe in more Gods than one, I should think they would find themselves often painfully bewildered and strangely confused. I should think the tendency of such belief would be to distract the mind of the worshiper, to create doubt and sad perplexity at times, and in the end to weaken if it did not overthrow his faith. And this appears to be the opinion of men more worthy to be heard on this subject than myself, and whose opportunities of observing the effects of the popular doctrine of a *tri-personal* God have been more ample than mine. One of your own denomination,—one whom I have no doubt you respect and love,—the talented and excellent Dr. Bushnell, writing of those who hold “this view of metaphysical tri-personality,” remarks that, “mournful evidence will be found that a confused and painfully bewildered state is often pro-

duced by it. They are," he continues, "practically at work in their thoughts, to choose between the three; sometimes actually and decidedly preferring one to another; doubting how to adjust their mind in worship; uncertain, often, which of the three to obey; turning away, possibly, from one in a feeling of dread that might well be called aversion; devoting themselves to another, as the Romanist to his patron saint. This, in fact, is Polytheism, and not the clear, simple love of God. There is true love in it, doubtless, but the comfort of love is not here. The mind is involved in a dismal confusion, which we cannot think of without the sincerest pity." \*

The frankness and sincerity of this—coming as it does from a distinguished minister in a denomination that professes to believe in a tri-personal God—no one is better able to appreciate than yourself. In its candid, courageous, and manly tone, it reminds one of yourself—sounds very much like some of your own honest, straight-forward utterances. Yet I know that even Dr. Bushnell—much as you may respect and love him—is no authority with you; nor should he be. I only quote him to show how wiser men than I—men even in your own denomination—have thought and spoken on this great subject. But you bow with humility and cheerfulness to the authority of the Bible. And upon no one point is the teaching of the Bible more indisputable, I think, than upon the strict personal unity of God. It affirms nothing with more clearness or emphasis—no, not even the *existence* of the Divine Being—

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\* Bushnell's "God in Christ," p. 134.

than that "the Lord our God is one Lord." And this you admit as heartily as I do. Therefore it is unnecessary to argue the point. But how to reconcile this admission with the declarations in the paragraph of your sermon above quoted, is the difficulty. It is what I confess myself utterly unable to do. It is what I do not think even you yourself, or any other mortal or immortal being, can do. For you say : "I believe that there is God the Father ; I believe that there is God the Son ; and I believe that there is God the Holy Ghost. I believe that these are three beings, with separate and distinct understandings, with separate and distinct conscience, with separate and distinct will." You also speak in the same paragraph of "these three personal Gods," and add, with a frankness and candor that I greatly admire, "I understand their three-fold personality as much as I understand the existence of three different friends."

Now in other parts of your sermon you have declared your belief in a *personal* God, in contradistinction to that pantheistic view, which you justly characterize as "the theological annihilation of God as a personal being ;" and you have combatted, with even more than *your* usual force and eloquence, that prevalent notion—falsely believed to be philosophical—which conceives of God "as an effluence of ether, diffused radiantly throughout the universe ;" while you have rendered equally conspicuous the practical importance of believing in God as a Divine Person. Thus you say, truly, "that no man can form any conception of God except as a Person. We cannot know

Him in such a way as that He shall manifest Himself to us, and abide with us, except as a living Person ; not even as a personage, which means something more than a person—nor in any way that sets before us an impersonal God, such as fancy imagines ; a vast diffusive power ; the essence or the life of the universe ; a spiritual vitality—and all that trashy nonsense. I hold that such a view of God as this is waste matter—mere fantastic moonshine.” And as showing the practical value which you attach to the belief in God as a Divine Person, you further remark : “ I do not say that a philosophical conception of the elements of the Divine Nature is impossible ; but I do say that such a conception is not one which the soul can use ; it is not one which ever produces love. In other words, I do not believe that any man who thinks of God as an abstract being, having no resemblance to what we are, ever has a God whom he fondly loves. . . . I stand up fearlessly and say that it is not in the power of a human being to love that which does not come to him as a person. . . . You can never have a God that you can take hold of and say, ‘ My Lord and my God,’ or one that you can love, so long as you regard Him as a mystic something filling all space, and having no personality.” And you also tell us who, according to your belief, that personal God is. He is the risen Saviour—the glorified Christ. The best you can do is, “ to give God the form of the glorified Jesus Christ.” “ We cannot,” say you, “ conceive of a being without a form ; but it is not best that our imagination should have unbounded play ;

therefore there is given to us the person of Jesus Christ, who is a fit form by which to conceive of God." Nor do you believe with Unitarians that Jesus Christ was merely a messenger sent from God. You believe that he was the manifested Jehovah—"God with us." You "believe that one of the greatest elements of power is utterly cast away and lost, when Christ is regarded as a messenger *from* God, and not as God Himself, manifest in the flesh." You believe that "it is the very God that beams out from Christ, and not a secondary and transmitted impression of God through a man." Therefore you worship Him as "the Alpha, the Omega, the First, the Last," and deem it right that we should give to Christ "all that the human soul can give to any being."

Now I subscribe to these sentiments with all my heart. And I think that what you say is not only true, but truth of great practical moment, and which needs to be particularly impressed upon the minds of Christians at this time. But the force of this sound and excellent teaching seems to be greatly impaired, if not in a measure nullified, by the declarations in that part of your sermon to which I object. For consider: You first declare your belief in God as a Divine Person. You maintain that He is not, and cannot be, truly conceived of, otherwise than as a Person. You insist, too, on the *importance* of a belief in his personality; and maintain that the Lord Jesus Christ is that Divine Person. Yet, in the exceptionable paragraph upon which I am remarking, you state it as your belief that there are "*three beings* [God the Father,



God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost] with separate and distinct understandings, with separate and distinct conscience, with separate and distinct will"; and even speak of "three personal Gods" whose "three fold personality" is as clear and distinct to your mind "as the existence of three different friends;" and you declare, "I should believe in tritheism did I not find the simple statement in Scripture that these three personal Gods are one." Pardon me, my brother, if I say, that, according to every fair interpretation of language, you *do* believe in tritheism. For, pray tell me what else than a belief in tritheism it is, to believe in three divine beings with separate and distinct understandings, conscience, and will, and whose "three-fold personality" stands out as clear and distinct to your mental vision as the "existence of three different friends?" If you really believe in God as a Divine Person—as a being in human form, so revealed or manifested in the person of Jesus Christ—and if at the same time you *think* of *three* Divine Persons, as distinct one from the other as any "three different friends," do you not actually believe in three Gods, whatever your lips may utter or your pen inscribe? Certainly you do not believe with your lips or your pen, but with your *mind*; and your real belief on any and every subject, is according to the thought of your understanding on that subject. So that if you *think* of three Divine Persons, it seems to me you must think of, and therefore believe in, three Gods; and your mere oral or written declaration of a belief in *one* God does not matter, nor in any way alter the case. You cannot,

I think, according to any honest and intelligent use of language, declare your belief in the proper unity of God, or in *one only* Divine Person, and at the same time affirm that you believe in *three* Divine Persons with separate and distinct understandings, conscience and will, without justly exposing yourself to the charge of the most palpable self-contradiction. The two beliefs are utterly and forever irreconcilable. If we think of a *personal* God, we must either think (no matter what we *say*) of *one* Person, or of *more* Persons than one; and as we *think*, so we *believe*. And this latter thought or belief, I submit, is polytheism, however we may seek, by an ingenious use of words or phrases, to conceal the solemn fact from ourselves or others.

Does this seem to you harsh or reproachful language? I do not intend it as such. It is really the mildest and kindest that I know how to use, while seeking to make my thought on this subject, and what seems to me your own inconsistency, plain. Nor have I spoken more harshly here than some of your own denomination when discussing the same theme. Your estimable brother whom I have already quoted (Dr. Bushnell) remarks with characteristic candor: "A very large portion of the Christian teachers, together with the general mass of disciples, undoubtedly hold three real living persons, in the interior nature of God; that is, three consciousnesses, wills, hearts, understandings"—precisely what I understood you to hold, according to a fair interpretation of that part of your sermon which I am criticising. "But our properly

orthodox teachers and churches"—to quote further from the same excellent authority—"while professing three persons, also retain the verbal profession of one person. They suppose themselves really to hold that God is one person. And yet they most certainly do not; they only confuse their understanding and call their confusion faith. This, I affirm, not as speaking reproachfully, but as I suppose on the ground of sufficient evidence—partly because it cannot be otherwise, and partly because it visibly is not. No man can assert three persons, meaning three consciousnesses, wills, and understandings, and still have any intelligent meaning in his mind when he asserts that they are yet one person."

I repeat, then—not reproachfully or unkindly by any means, but with a view of leading you to serious reflection on this subject—that you *do* most certainly believe in tritheism, if, holding, as you profess, to the strict and proper personality of God, you still allow yourself to *think* of three Persons. You may *say* that you disbelieve in tritheism, but I think you deceive yourself in this. It is your *thought* on the subject (is it not?) rather than the utterance of your lips or the inscription of your pen, that determines your real belief. You believe in the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ. You believe Him to be a Divine Person in no qualified or poetic sense;—not merely "a messenger *from* God," but "God himself manifest in the flesh." So you declare. Permit me, then, to ask, or to beg that you will ask yourself, Do you believe in any *other* Divine Person? If so, I

leave you to draw the necessary inference. Do you believe that *in* Christ dwelleth, as the Apostle assures us, "all the fulness of the Divinity"? or that *out of* and distinct from Him, as you are out of and distinct from any two of your friends, there exist two other Divine Persons? If "all the fullness," which I understand to mean the *wholeness* or *totality* of the Godhead or Divinity, dwells in Christ, then where is the need or even the propriety of thinking of any Divinity *out of* Him, or of any other Person except Him? Yet you seem to think of two other Persons, or at least to think that there *are* two others, however feeble the conception you are able to form of them. For, near the close of your sermon, looking forward to a period when you shall have passed from this stage of being, and expressing the confident belief that you shall then behold Christ "as He is, no whit less than God," you add: "And if then likewise before my clarified vision there shall arise in equal proportions of majesty the then revealed Father and Holy Spirit, they shall not overshadow my Christ, nor take anything from the glory of His Divinity. What this final revelation of the majesty of God shall be, I am content to leave till that hour of birth which men call death." "The *then* revealed Father!" You surprise me, my brother, by this language, not less than by that quoted in the earlier part of my letter. And I am prompted to ask, Is God the Father as yet *unrevealed* to Christians? Must we wait till "that hour of birth which men call death" for the revelation of our Father in Heaven? Has not the Father graciously revealed Himself to us

already? Was it not one great object of Christ's advent to "bring the Father forth to view?" Did not all that is signified by the Father—all the fulness of the Divine Love—dwell in Christ, as the soul in the body? And seeing Him, do we not see the Father, as truly as I see you when I look upon your body, which is the natural out-birth and express image of your soul—your *real* self—in this lower sphere? How else are we to interpret the explicit declarations of the Divine Saviour Himself? "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me."

If, then, you have seen Christ—seen him, I mean, with your mental eye—if you have seen and comprehended His blessed spirit of humility, meekness, forbearance, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, forgiveness—if you have felt the power of His redeeming love in your soul like the warmth of a summer's sun—if you have seen Him working mysteriously in the deep places of your heart, opening up and revealing to your conscious perception the supreme selfishness and manifold evils of your natural man, and teaching and strengthening you to overcome them—if you have thus, spiritually and truly, seen Christ, then, and in that degree, have you seen the Father. The Divine has been manifested to you in and through the Human;—God has been revealed to you in Christ—the Father in the Son.

*'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.'* And in no other way—sure as God's Word is true—will the Father ever be revealed or shown to men. As we advance in the regenerate life, and our vision becomes clarified, we shall be able to comprehend more and more of the Divine, and thus to see more and more of the Father ; for he will continue to reveal Himself to us in richer floods of glory, and greater depths of tenderness and love, as we draw nearer to His moral likeness. But ever will it be—in the land of the Hereafter not less than of the Now and Here—as the successive unfoldings and revealings of the same great Central Luminary—the emanations from the face of the same Spiritual Sun, grown brighter, sweeter, and more entrancing, as the smoke and vapor that surround our little earth-worlds fade away and disappear.

And *thus* will the Father arise in the Hereafter—not as another *Person* “in equal proportions of majesty,” but as the *self-same* Person—the same almighty and blessed Saviour manifesting Himself more plainly “before our clarified vision ;”—showing us more and more clearly the face of our heavenly Father ;—revealing, with ever increasing fulness, according to our growing receptivity, the amazing wealth of the Divine Wisdom, and sweetness of the Divine Love. So that, what you are looking forward to as the “final revelation of the majesty of God,” and which you think is veiled in utter darkness now, will only be a fuller revelation of His unspeakable wisdom and matchless love—a more complete unfolding and revealing to human spirits, of those essential human attributes (pre-eminent

among which stands disinterested love), which constitute the glory, and greatness, and hence "the majesty" of God.

*Can* this final revelation of the Divine majesty be aught else than this, according to every rational and Scriptural view of the subject? Nay, can it be aught else, according to your own idea of the Divine character, and of the particular attribute which constitutes the distinguishing and chief element of God's greatness—unselfish love? This essential attribute of the Divine Nature stands forth conspicuously in the person and character of Christ, even to our now obscure and beclouded vision. And when we shall have passed the portals of the tomb, and been lifted into realms of loftier thought and sweeter affection—when the dust of earth-born desires, which so obscures our vision now, shall have passed away, and our souls shall have emerged into the pure and serene air of heaven, may we not reasonably expect that, to our then clarified vision, the same Divine Saviour's face will glow with a seven-fold radiance—His love and wisdom beam with a seven-fold intensity? So was it with the three favored disciples of old. When they were carried "up into an high mountain, apart," He, who appeared before to their ordinary perception as little more than common flesh and blood, was now "transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Why may we not consider this Scripture as designed to teach us the beautiful and important lesson, that the Lord Jesus is *always* transfigured before his dis-

ciples in the degree that they are brought into higher spiritual states—up into the mount of his own purity and love? The farther we advance in the regenerate life, or the higher we ascend spiritually, so much the more resplendent shines the face of the Divine Saviour. So that when we reach that heavenly city where there is no night, and “where they need no candle neither light of the sun,” we may expect to see Him as He is seen by the angels—“His face shining as the sun, and his raiment white as the light.” And if God is the Sun of the spiritual world, as the Scripture teaches, and if Christ appears to the angels all radiant with light,—“above the brightness of the Sun”—as he appeared to the Apostle on his way to Damascus, then we cannot conceive of a plurality of Divine Persons, without at the same time conceiving of a plurality of heavenly Suns—a plurality of Gods.

But you believe in the tri-personality of God, because you think the Bible teaches it. “The New Testament,” you say, “teaches three persons.” Pardon me, my brother, for saying, that here you labor under a great mistake. This idea was doubtless early impressed upon your mind; and it is, I presume, from the influence of that early teaching, rather than from any conviction on the subject reached by a careful personal examination, that this assertion is made. I do not mean to charge that it is made rashly or thoughtlessly—for I understand too well the force of early teaching to do that; but sure am I, that if you carefully examine the New Testament with reference to this point, you will yourself discover your mistake.



You will find, as I have found, that the doctrine of three *Persons* in the Godhead, is not a doctrine of the Bible. I affirm with confidence that no such doctrine is anywhere taught in the Sacred Scripture. And if you think otherwise, I should esteem it a special favor if you would refer me to the particular passage—for I confess I have never met with it. No. This tri-personal doctrine, rely upon it, is not a doctrine explicitly taught in the Bible, but is simply an inference drawn by frail and fallible men from what is there taught. And when you consider what strange things men have understood the Bible to teach on other subjects—what false and absurd opinions have been supposed to be the legitimate and necessary inferences from its teachings—you may, perhaps, be able to concede the possibility, that, upon this subject also the inference may not be well-founded.

That the Bible teaches the existence of a Trinity in the Divine Being is fully conceded. I also am willing to concede, that, in the literal sense of the Scripture, this Trinity *appears* to be a Trinity of Persons—just as it sometimes *appears* from the same sense as if God actually indulged in anger, hatred, revenge, and fury, and that He repents like one who has sinned or made a mistake. But you, I cannot doubt, will agree with me when I say, that the *apparent* truth in the letter of the Bible is not always to be accepted for the *real* truth. There is much apparent truth in the volume of Nature which we know is quite different from the real truth; and the language of men is framed to agree rather with appearances than with realities.

Thus when we say that the sun *rises*, or the sun *goes down*, it is well known that our language expresses only the *apparent* and not the *real* truth. What if, in this respect, there should be found to exist a close analogy between the volume of Nature and the volume of Revelation? And what if, when we penetrate beneath the letter of Scripture—when we pass beyond the cloudy region of appearances to the brighter realm of realities—we should find this appearance of three Persons in the Godhead to be *only* an appearance? What if, looking beyond the letter that killeth to the spirit that giveth life, we should find revealed to us in the higher and truer sense of Scripture only *one* Divine Person, in whom, nevertheless, are three essential elements, represented in the letter by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? It would only be verifying the truth and justness of your own apt illustration of the subject by three branches springing from one trunk, and *appearing* to the superficial observer, who views them “from behind a garden wall,” as *three trees*. When, at the same time, to quote the language which you put into the mouth of one of your supposed interlocutors, “If you could look behind the wall, you would find that, after all, these apparently three trees came together at a point beyond your sight, and stand upon one root, and make but one tree.” The illustration is a good one;—not good, however, for your tri-personal doctrine, but quite at war with it.

But you yourself perceive the difficulties with which the popular doctrine of the Trinity is embarrassed, and with characteristic manliness and candor acknowledge

them. "I am obliged," you say, "on any ground, to recognize difficulties, and to feel my ignorance; and at the very best it is a choice of difficulties." "Whichever way I go in the New Testament, if I walk with those who believe in the absolute oneness of God, or with those who believe in the tri-personality of one God, I find many things obscure. Surely, I should change my view if another one were presented to me which reconciled and harmonized every passage of the New Testament." There is a doctrine which I think does this—and which I propose in future letters to unfold and explain;—a doctrine alike rational and Scriptural, which, while it maintains a Divine Trinity, shows this Trinity to be of such a nature as is compatible with the strict *personal* unity of God and the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ. And though I can hardly hope so to unfold and exhibit this new doctrine, that you will be able at once to see it clear of all difficulty, I trust I may be enabled to present it in such light as to convince you that the difficulties attendant upon it are incomparably less than those by which the old and popular doctrine is confessedly embarrassed. However that may be, I cannot doubt but my well-meant effort will be duly appreciated by you; and sincerely hope that the spirit which prevades my Letters may ever be such as to meet the approval of our common Lord and Master, and advance in some humble degree the interests of His blessed kingdom. In this hope I subscribe myself

Your Friend and Brother,

Orange, May 28, 1859.

B. F. BARRETT.

## LETTER II.

## WHERE TO LOOK FOR AN IMAGE OF THE DIVINE TRINITY.

MY DEAR SIR :—Permit me to say, in resuming the subject of my last letter, that I write not in the interests of any sect or party—not even as a New Churchman in the popular or technical sense of that term. But I write in the interests of our common Christianity, and with the desire of promoting a cause which, I doubt not, is as dear to your heart as to mine—the cause of pure and undefiled religion.

You, my brother, occupy no ordinary position in the church of Christ. Your learning and talents, your piety and zeal, your manly independence and noble courage, your sincerity and earnestness, your devotion to every cause which you believe good and just, combined with your vivid imagination, your fertility in resources, and your brilliant and unrivalled rhetorical powers, place you deservedly among the foremost of those now occupying the American pulpit. Your influence is probably more extensive and more potent than that of any other clergyman in the United States. Your utterances are caught up by the religious and secular press, and wafted, as on the wings of the wind, to the remotest corners of our land. Where ordinary preachers count their audiences by tens (including readers as well as hearers), you may count yours by

thousands. It is, therefore, far more important for *you* to be right on all questions of moment in morals and religion, than for other men—as much more important as your influence is wider and more powerful. If you go wrong, or teach something which is not true, the mischief of such teaching will be incalculably greater than though the same error had been taught by one of your humbler brethren. An ordinary minister may start from false premises, or reason badly from those that are true; he may teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and present for Bible truth dogmas that are false and absurd; he may contradict himself repeatedly in the same discourse—as not unfrequently happens—and no great harm result from it. But when a minister of such commanding talents and influence as you possess, presents a defective argument on any high theme, or when he affirms things that are irreconcilable with each other and with right reason, the cause of Christ suffers more damage. His defective argument or false affirmation will be taken up and repeated by ten thousand tongues, and his error be propagated to distant lands and a remote posterity. And if there are those who perceive the defect in his logic, or the error in his statement, they will be likely to think such error or defect belongs to the Christian system itself; and so Christianity will suffer in their estimation.

It is, then, in view of your position in the American church of Christ, and your unquestionable influence in shaping the future theological thought of our country, that I am induced to write you on this subject of the

Divine Trinity. It is an important subject and has ever been so regarded by Christians. It is one, about which there have been many long and angry controversies in the church. The popular doctrine on the subject—*i. e.* the doctrine of three Divine Persons, which has been held by the great majority of Christians ever since the Council of Nice—is confessedly embarrassed with great difficulties. Yourself and others of your own denomination are candid enough to acknowledge this. *You* see that it is hard—I hold it to be impossible—to believe in a *personal* God, and at the same time to believe in, or to think of, *three* Divine Persons, without believing in tritheism—a doctrine universally conceded by Christians to be contrary alike to reason and Scripture.

It was the design of my previous letter to show, that, to believe in “three Beings with separate and distinct understandings, with separate and distinct conscience, and with separate and distinct will,”—language quoted from your sermon—and whose three-fold personality stands as clearly defined to your mental vision as “the existence of three different friends,” according to every fair and honest use of language, is nothing less than a belief in tritheism. And I beg you seriously to consider this, and see if it is not so. You believe in the absolute divinity of Jesus Christ; you believe Him to have been not merely a “messenger *from* God,” but “God himself manifest in the flesh.” The glorified Christ stands revealed to your mental perception as a Divine Person. And if you believe in a *personal* God, as you profess, it is impos-

sible for you to *think* of the existence of any *other* Divine Person, without thinking of more Gods than one. Is it not so?

Here, then, your tri-personal doctrine is met, *in limine*, by the solid and insurmountable objection, that it necessarily involves a belief in tritheism. And if tritheism be not agreeable either to Scripture or reason, then it is certain that the teaching of the Bible on this subject has been misunderstood. The Trinity therein revealed must be some other than a trinity of *Persons*. And when we consider upon how many other subjects the teaching of Scripture has been misunderstood, why should it be difficult for us to admit that upon this also its meaning may have been misapprehended? It is certainly easier to believe that Christians have misunderstood God's Word on this subject, than to believe that His Word teaches a doctrine so repugnant to enlightened reason as tritheism, or any thing nearly allied to it. And if a belief in tritheism be unreasonable, and unfriendly to the development of the highest religious life, might we not expect, in view of the immense multitude of persons who have accepted the tri-personal doctrine, and of the tenacity with which that doctrine has been held, that a new revelation on this subject, would, at some time or other, be vouchsafed to Christians? Is it reasonable to suppose, that, upon a theme of so much magnitude and importance as the nature of the Divine Trinity, the Lord would permit his church to remain forever in darkness? For when such a view of any subject is presented as requires for its acceptance the

complete surrender if not the absolute crucifixion of my reason, I call it darkness. If there be a true doctrine of the Trinity, different from the one which you profess, and which has been held by the great majority of Christians for so many centuries, what could be more reasonable than to expect that it would some day be revealed? And may not the revelation of the genuine truth on this subject, together with an unfolding of the deeper and truer meaning of Scripture on other subjects, be among the things pointed at in those prophetic intimations which our Saviour uttered eighteen hundred years ago? "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father." I believe that the time here alluded to has already come; and that men—all, I mean who have eyes to see—are now being shown plainly of the Father. I believe that the spirit of truth here promised—the spirit of the Divine Word—has come, and that it is even now guiding the genuine disciples of the Lord, whose hearts are open to receive it, into all truth. I believe that the true spiritual sense of the Word has been laid open by that distinguished servant of the Lord, Emanuel Swedenborg; and among other interesting and important truths therein revealed, is the truth concerning the Divine Trinity. I grant that it *appears* from the literal sense of the Scripture as if there were three



*persons* in the Godhead—though this is no where distinctly taught ;—just as your three branches springing from one trunk *appear* to the superficial observer, or to one who views them “from behind a garden wall,” as three trees. But the spiritual sense *\*breaks down* that garden wall, or lifts us above it ; for it lifts us above mere *appearances* and discloses *realities*. It shows us, that, what appears from the sense of the letter as three Divine Persons, is in reality but one Divine Person—just as a closer observation, or a higher view, of your *apparently* three trees shows them “coming together at a point beyond your [former] sight, and standing upon one root, and making but one tree.”

The doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity, therefore, to which I invite your serious attention, is none other than that revealed for the New Church through Swedenborg. But no special indulgence is claimed for the view I am about to present, on the score of Swedenborg’s alleged or admitted illumination. You are not asked to accept it on his authority, but simply to examine it with candor in the light of reason and Revelation. But if I succeed in showing you that it has the testimony of both these witnesses, I am encouraged to believe that you will accept it with your whole heart ; for you say in your late sermon, “Surely, I should change my view if another one were presented to me which reconciled and harmonized every passage of the New Testament.” I think the New Church doctrine on the subject does this. And though you may not agree with me, I trust you will give to what I say a candid hearing.

And I rejoice that you and I have so much common ground to stand upon. The points upon which we agree, touching the great central doctrine of Christianity—the doctrine concerning the true Object of worship—are numerous and important. My first notice of your sermon on “Understanding God” must have satisfied you of this. We even agree as to the fact of a trinity in God, and differ only as to the nature of this trinity. I accept, too, what you say about the measure of our ability to understand or interpret God. And as it seems to have an important bearing upon the subject under discussion, you will pardon me for introducing here a few extracts from your late sermon.

“First, in further opening up this subject, I remark that man’s own being is given to him as the determining element by which he is to understand all things outside of himself. This is the only means by which we can measure and understand things foreign to ourselves; and I do not hesitate to say that no man can understand anything of which there is not in himself an element or analogue.”

“The moment you undertake to understand anything predicated of the Divine Being, of which there is not some germ, some seed-form, in yourself, to stand as an analogue, that very moment you fall into confusion.”

“It has been thought to be the right way of exalting God, to teach that He is absolutely different from men. . . . It has been thought to be presumption to take that which is God-like in man, and by it to represent truthfully God’s nature. It has been supposed that all of God’s likening himself to man in the Bible, is on account of our weakness; and that accordingly, it is to be interpreted as giving us some proximate idea of what God is, but not as giving us the real truth. Well,

what is the use of proximate truth, that is not a bit like the real truth?"

"I aver that the quality of love in God is exactly like the quality of love in you. . . . If a man says that love in me is no fit measure of the depth, or the breadth, or the length, or the versatility of the love of God, he is right; but yet it is a true criterion by which to judge of the essential quality of love in God."

"What an utter wreck and ruin would be presented of that false notion of God which some persons hold, namely, that we can have no real knowledge of Him, but only a kind of false representation, which comes nearer representing Him than anything else, but still is nothing like a true representation—what an utter wreck and ruin, I say, would be presented of this false notion, if every conscientious man were to admit that God is in no respect different, in the essential elements of his character, from men, but a being whom we ourselves come nearer representing than anything else!"

"The Scripture teaching on this point is simply this—that man was made in the image of God, in order, as we suppose, that he might understand Him. The spiritual and the higher nature of man is really, absolutely like God's; just as red is like red, just as green is like green."

"We are so like God in this respect, that if you know what disinterested love is, then you know the kind of love that God feels; if you know what true justice is, you know what God regards as justice. You know not the whole experience of God; but if you know one letter in the alphabet of a knowledge of God, that letter gives you a correct conception of Him as far as it goes."

"Right thinking, based upon right living, is the philosophical method of finding out God."

"Let us turn to a saying of the Apostle John, which has an intimate bearing upon this subject: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' Children

are like their parents. They inherit their nature from their parents. Like begets like everywhere. From the beginning of the world to the present, the declaration has been ringing that we are God's children ; that we are like God ; that we are made in God's image ; that God is our Father ; that the parental likeness is given us in its elements."

"That is the way you are going to see God—by your own consciousness, and the qualities in you answering to a like consciousness and to like qualities in Him. And no man can know one whit more of God than he possesses in his own being. We can comprehend God only to the degree that His power, in-dwelling in us, causes our higher nature to act as His nature acts, thus rendering us interpreters of Him."

Now I accept what you here say as at once rational and Scriptural. You have only stated in varied language what is more summarily expressed in the language of Holy Writ : "So God created man in His own image ; in the image of God created He him." But let us apply this sound and excellent teaching to the subject under consideration.

You maintain that "you cannot understand anything predicated of the Divine Being, of which there is not some germ, some seed-form in yourself." You reject, as "a false notion," the doctrine which teaches "that He is absolutely different from men," and declare your belief "that God is in no respect different, in the essential elements of His character, from men, but a Being whom we ourselves come nearer representing than anything else." And, consistently enough, you add : "Right thinking, based upon right living, is the philosophical method of finding out God." Your meaning here seems quite intelligible—and alike

rational and Scriptural : It is, that we understand, or "find out" God more and more, the more we become *like* Him in the spirit and temper of our minds. By "right living," I suppose you mean *willing* right and *acting* right ; for both willing and acting are involved in living. Then your meaning in the last sentence quoted, must be, that the best and truly philosophical method of finding out God, is, to think right, to feel or will right, and to act right. And you will no doubt agree with me, that to think right on moral and spiritual themes, is to think according to the will of God as revealed in His Holy Word ; or, to think in accordance with the laws of heavenly order—to think according to the truths of spiritual and heavenly life. But you very well know that right *thinking*, however indispensable this may be to right acting, is not alone sufficient to constitute one a good man or a genuine Christian. Therefore you have wisely coupled with this, right *living*. And right living clearly involves two things : First, a right purpose of the heart—a pure motive—a right determination of the will ; and second, the ultimation of that right purpose, or the carrying of our good intentions into outward act. In other words, when the ruling purpose of a man's heart is to do right, or, what is the same, to do God's will without any thought of recompense, then his motive is pure—his will has a right determination. And when he carries his good purpose into effect, that is, when he actually *does* God's will, from love to Him, or from a desire to please Him, then he lives right. Then he *lives* or *acts* according

to those laws of heavenly order, in agreement with which he *thinks* and *wills*. His thoughts and feelings are heavenly ; and his deeds, outflowing therefrom, are of a corresponding character. Such a man is in the likeness of God, for he has God's image in himself. And by virtue of this in-dwelling of the Divine likeness, he is enabled to understand God—to see Him mentally or spiritually. And this is the only way that God can be truly seen or understood. Hence it is written, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ;” that is, shall mentally perceive Him—shall understand His true character.

This I understand to be the obvious meaning of what is taught in your sermon. This is your own view without any essential modification, and but slightly expanded. It is what I gather from your language when you say : “That is the way you are going to see God—by your own consciousness, and the qualities in you answering to a like consciousness and to like qualities in Him. And no man can know one whit more of God than he possesses in his own being. We can comprehend God only to the degree that His power, in-dwelling in us, causes our higher nature to act as His nature acts, thus rendering us interpreters of Him.”

You will not fail to discover the purpose for which I have made these quotations from your sermon. They are extremely pertinent to the subject under discussion. For if we “are going to see God” by having in ourselves elements or qualities which answer to like elements or qualities in Him, then should we not look to ourselves in order to see, that is, to un-

understand, the true nature of the trinity in God? If, as you affirm, "no man can know one whit more of God than he possesses in his own being," then what can we know of the nature of the Divine Trinity, except so far as we have the image and likeness of that Trinity in ourselves? Do you say we know nothing, and therefore can affirm nothing, in regard to the nature of the Divine Trinity? I answer that *you do* affirm something in regard to the nature of this Trinity, when you declare your belief in three Divine *Persons*. You affirm it to be *tri-personal* in its nature. I, on the contrary, maintain that the trinity in God is *not* tri-personal, but that it is precisely such in its nature as is the trinity in every good or regenerating man; and even in a bad man, we have an inverted image of this Trinity. And for this I think you must concede that I have the warrant of Holy Scripture. The Bible declares that man was originally made in the image of God. Then, whatever be the nature of the Trinity in God, there must have been originally an image of that Trinity in man; and from the nature of the finite human trinity, we ought to be able to learn that of the Infinite Divine Trinity—just as from the nature or quality of our finite human love, we may learn that of the Infinite Divine Love; and you yourself believe that we can learn the nature of God's love in no other way. "I aver," say you, "that the quality of love in God is exactly like the quality of love in you. As for power of love, and as for all manner of multitudinous disclosures, of course God is tropical, and we are like Nova Zembla; but as to

the matter of loving, He loves just as we love. I, with the little spark in my bosom, love just as God loves with the vast flame which is ever bursting forth from His great nature." And notwithstanding God's image in the soul of man has been terribly marred and distorted by sin, it has ever been, and is still, the belief of Christians, that by regeneration the Divine image is restored to us. This renewal or restoration of God's image in the soul, is obviously what is meant by the *new man* and the *new creation* of which Paul speaks; for, writing to the Ephesian brethren on the subject of this inward spiritual renewal, he exhorts them to "put on the new man, which, *after God*, is created in righteousness and true holiness." And again, writing to the Colossians, he speaks of "the new man" as one "which is renewed in knowledge *after the image* of Him that created him." And elsewhere in the Bible the regenerate are spoken of as the sons or children of God, and as created anew in His own image and likeness. Thus, in a passage quoted in your sermon (1 John iii. 2): "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is." And upon this you justly remark, that "we shall see Him just as He is, because we shall be like Him." That is, we shall understand God in the degree that we become spiritually like Him—in the degree that we are created anew after His Divine likeness. Or, to cite again your own language, "The moment we begin to grow like Christ, that moment we begin to



understand him better ; and the more we grow like Him, the better we shall understand Him."

We have, then, the indisputable warrant of Holy Scripture for saying that man was originally created in the image of God. And the same high authority assures us, that, although this image has been defaced, and almost blotted out, through the malign power of evil, yet by the new spiritual birth the Divine likeness is restored to the soul. By following the Lord in the regeneration, man is re-created in the image of his Maker. This is so clearly taught in the Bible, that it is believed by nearly all Christendom. It is your own belief. And I submit that the logical and necessary inference from this, is, that whatever be the nature of the Divine Trinity, the *image* of that Trinity must be found in every regenerate or regenerating man. And if we are not justified in calling a regenerate man tri-personal, no more are we justified in speaking or thinking of a tri-personal God. We have not the least warrant, either from Scripture or reason, for believing in or talking of any other *kind* of trinity in God, than that which exists in every man who has been created anew in God's own image. And when men *do* think of any different kind—when they talk of a *tri-personal* God, to cite the language of our candid brother Bushnell, "they only confuse their understanding, and call their confusion faith." What can we understand—what ought we, therefore, to believe or teach—concerning any trinity in God, other than that whose image, seed-form, or analogue we find in ourselves? For, as you yourself have truly said, "the

moment you undertake to understand anything predicated of the Divine Being, of which there is not some germ, some seed-form in yourself, to stand as an analogue, that moment you fall into confusion." And when you talk about a trinity in God, to which we find nothing analogous in the finite human being—a trinity of such a nature that there is nothing in man or known to man which resembles it, or gives us the least idea of it—a trinity of which it is not pretended that any human understanding is able to take cognizance, or one which, if there be any such pretense, leads by the strictest logical necessity to tritheism—when you talk, I say, of such an unknown and incomprehensible trinity, "I am"—to use your own language in reference to certain abstract qualities that do not centre in a *personal* God—"I am crazed by it." You talk of a trinity, the image of which is unknown on earth, and whose nature there is nothing in me that explains, or furnishes the least clue to it. It is as if you talked in Sanscrit, or discoursed to me of a sixth sense. And, to quote again from your generally excellent sermon, "when you attempt to conceive of a sixth sense, unlike anything in you, every one feels that there is no such thing as understanding such a sense, because there is nothing in ourselves by which to interpret it."

I maintain, therefore, that the true nature of the Divine Trinity reveals itself in the constitution of the finite human being, and finds here its only complete and rational explanation. The image of this Trinity is and must be in ourselves, because we were created

to be images and likenesses of God. We were made to be the recipients, in a finite degree, of each and every element that enters into the Divine character. We can know nothing of God's love save as its nature or quality is revealed to us in the love that we feel, and which flows into our hearts from Him who is Love Itself. We can know nothing of God's wisdom, except so far as that humble measure of our human wisdom, which we receive from Him, shadows forth, or in some measure images, the Divine. And so of God's mercy, justice, long-suffering, tenderness, benevolence, foresight, righteousness, and all the other Divine attributes ; we can have no knowledge of them, and of course cannot talk of them intelligently, except in the degree that we have some measure—some faint image at least—of these same attributes in ourselves. And this, doubtless, you will concede, since it follows as a logical inference from your own affirmations, that it is the spiritual nature [in us] that interprets God ; that “as to the matter of loving, He loves just as we love ;” and that “the quality of love in God is exactly like the quality of love in you,” only immeasurably superior in purity, amplitude and power.

Rely upon it, then, my brother, the true doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity, like every other doctrine concerning the Divine character and attributes, must base itself upon the constitution of our own immortal being, and find its image, and so its rational interpretation there. Any doctrine which fails to do this, will sooner or later be seen to have no foun-

dation, and will be discarded by the wise and good as a mere human invention.

But what is the trinity in man which is supposed to image forth, and so to interpret for us, the nature of the Divine Trinity? I should weary you, were I to enter upon the explanation of this now, and do anything like tolerable justice to the subject. Although it has been hinted at, and indistinctly shadowed forth in a portion of the present letter, I trust to be able in my next to make the matter so plain, that no lingering doubt about it shall remain in any honest mind. And if I succeed in satisfying you that this finite human trinity, the nature of which I propose to exhibit, is the analogue or image, and therefore the true interpreter for us, of the Infinite Divine Trinity, I shall feel that I have been amply rewarded for my humble effort. Meanwhile—begging that you will weigh with seriousness and candor what I have here said, for it has an important bearing on what I have yet to say—I subscribe myself

Your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARRETT.

*Orange, July 12, 1859.*

## LETTER III.

EXPLANATION OF THE TRINITY IN MAN WHICH IMAGES  
THE TRINITY IN GOD.

MY DEAR SIR:—In my last letter I endeavored to show, that, whatever be the nature of the Divine Trinity, the image of that Trinity must be found in every regenerate or regenerating man. And permit me here to say, that I see not how you can help admitting this to be a legitimate conclusion, as well from the plain teachings of Holy Scripture as from many declarations in your sermon which I have often quoted. The Bible plainly teaches that man was originally made in God's image and likeness. And you yourself, referring to the Scripture teaching on this subject, say, that "man was made in the image of God, in order, as we suppose, that he might understand Him." How else, then, shall we learn or understand the true nature of the trinity in God, save as we see that trinity *imaged* in ourselves? You further declare that "no man can know one whit more of God than he possesses in his own being." What, then, I ask again, can we know of the trinity in God, except what we learn of its nature from the image of that trinity in ourselves? That the inevitable inference from your own admissions as well as from the declarations of

Scripture, is directly at war with the popular doctrine on this subject, is no doubt as clear to you as to myself.

I will now endeavor to show, agreeable to the promise in my last letter, what is that trinity in man, from which, as an image, we are to learn the nature of the Divine Trinity. And we must look at the spiritual nature of man for that which shall be to us the image and exponent of the trinity in God ; for "God is a spirit." What, then, is the trinity in man viewed as a spiritual and immortal being ?

Whatever system of mental philosophy we adopt, we shall find, upon a careful analysis and induction, that all the faculties of the mind arrange themselves into two great classes, the one intellectual, the other emotional. The general divisions of the brain itself, according to the disclosures of modern science, furnish a solid basis for this classification. The intellectual faculties are those by which we think, reason, analyze and judge ; and together they constitute the *understanding*. The emotional, are those by which we feel, desire, purpose, and love ; and together they constitute the *will*. All of love and affection, therefore, belongs to the will ; all of wisdom and thought to the understanding. In whatever we do or say or determine, we shall find that these two general faculties, will and understanding, are brought into active exercise. Every mental and bodily movement originates in the will. We cannot speak nor act—no, nor even think determinately upon any given subject, without first willing or desiring so to do. But the understanding is intimately connected with the will, so that the two

act together mutually and reciprocally, like the heart and lungs. Accordingly we no sooner experience an emotion, than that emotion is transferred to the intellect in the form of some thought. We no sooner will or desire to speak or act, than this desire comes forth into conscious perception, and reveals itself in some corresponding thought in the understanding. If we desire to paint a picture, or carve a statue, or write a book, or make a machine, or embark in any enterprise, we immediately think of the kind of picture, statue, book or machine that we will make, or the nature of the enterprise in which we will embark. The thought is the offspring of the affection or desire, whose nature and quality it reveals. As we feel or love, so we think. Hence it has passed into a proverb that "the wish is father to the thought." Indeed it is impossible to conceive of any thought which does not proceed or flow from some desire in the will; and any one may know what are his dominant desires, by scanning the character of his prevailing thoughts, since these latter are the legitimate manifestations or out-births of the former. There are, it is true, different planes of thought—some higher and some lower; and an endless variety of subjects which may be thought of, on each plane. And there are also corresponding varieties or grades of love—different degrees of elevation to the will—affections differing in kind and intensity. But as all thought, be the subject or the plane whatever it may—be it the thought of things natural or of things spiritual, of this world or of the world to come—appertains to the understanding, so

all love of whatever kind or degree—be it the love of self and the world, or the love of the Lord and the neighbor—appertains to the will.

But there are, you will say, many different kinds and degrees of love appertaining to the mind of one and the same individual. A man loves his wife, his children, his friends, his neighbors, his country, his occupation, his church—and all these with an affection varying both in kind and in degree. And this, I grant, is true. But then there is always, as you are doubtless well aware, some particular kind of love in every man which is stronger than all the rest, and which may, therefore, properly enough be called his *ruling* love. This ruling love constitutes his life. It enters into and imparts its own quality to all his other loves. It mingles with all his desires, affects all his feelings, shapes all his thoughts, colors all his actions; so that a man may be said to be altogether such as his ruling love is. Thus, if a man's ruling love be the love of himself, this love will pervade his whole being—will enter into all he thinks and says and does. If he does an act that is outwardly good, he will do it from a selfish motive and for a selfish end; and, viewed inwardly, as to its prompting motive—viewed in relation to himself—the act is seen to be not good in reality, but only in appearance. It is inwardly defiled with the evil of self love. His devotion to his family, his neighborhood, his profession, his country, or the church, is not genuine—is not what it seems to be. The love of self is at the bottom of it all; and his thoughts out-flowing from this love, are thoughts



of himself and his own comfort and aggrandizement, and not of the welfare and happiness of others. Such an individual you would not call good, however good and fair his outward life might be; for he is not good, but supremely selfish at heart. His ruling love is evil, and this infects with its poison all his other loves. This is his life. And however it may be covered over and concealed in this world under various fair pretenses, it is none the less evil in itself considered; and sooner or later—in the other world if not in this—it will come forth and manifest itself. The inward defilement will reveal itself under corresponding forms of outward evil. “For,” as the Scripture saith, “out of the *heart* [by which is denoted the will-principle, where the ruling love resides] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.”

But suppose man's ruling love to be the opposite of the love of self—suppose him to love the Lord with all his heart—this love will diffuse its sweet perfume throughout all the chambers of his soul. All his subordinate loves will partake of the same elevating character, and therefore will all be good. He will seek in all things to learn and do the will of the Lord. Supreme love to Him will beget in His understanding corresponding thoughts—thoughts of what the Lord requires him to be and to do—thoughts of those things which are well-pleasing to Him. And since the Lord requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, this man will strive not so much to get good *from* others, as to

impart good *to* others. He will be animated with a desire to render himself in the highest degree *useful* in his day and generation. Such an individual—acting ever under the influence of a controlling desire and purpose to do the Lord's will—you would call good. He is a good man because his *heart* is right in the sight of God ; because his ruling love is good, or such as the Lord desires it should be—love to Him ; for it is the ruling love which determines a man's real character. And yet even this good man may not realize our highest conception of a human being. To do this, he must be *wise* as well as good. He must have a knowing *head* as well as a loving *heart*—an enlightened understanding as well as a good will. He must not only desire and purpose in all things to do God's will, but his understanding must be so illumined that he can see what that will is—at least in relation to himself—and how he is to do it. Otherwise—without the guiding light of wisdom—with the best of intentions, the man may often stray from the right path, and do things which a more enlightened understanding would have shown him to be wrong. Many good people, we know, often err through ignorance. Their hearts are right, but their heads are comparatively unenlightened. They have an abundance of love in their wills, but have not a corresponding measure of truth in their understandings. The errors of such people may not be sins—*are* not sins, if they have availed themselves of the opportunities of becoming enlightened which Providence has placed within their reach. Or, if sins, they are such as are not imputed

to them—such as God ever “winks at”—sins of ignorance.

You will concede, then, I think, that our highest conception of human character, or of a human being, is not realized until we have a wise and enlightened head united to a pure and loving heart. Truth in the understanding must be married to love in the will, so that the two shall exist and act together *as one*, like true conjugal partners, or like the heart and lungs in man. This is the union which God designed should exist in every human soul—a union which does exist in every true and thoroughly regenerate soul—viz., the union of the head with the heart, or of truth in the understanding with love in the will. It is a union of things which God hath joined together, but which man, in his state of alienation from God, is forever putting asunder—a union of truth with its goodness, of wisdom with its love. This is the heavenly marriage—a marriage which is consummated in every soul that becomes spiritually conjoined to Him, who is revealed in Scripture as the Bridegroom and Husband of the Church. This union of love in the will with wisdom in the understanding, is, to our moral world, what the union of light with heat is to the natural world. It clothes the earth within us with living verdure, and makes our wilderness an Eden, our desert like the garden of the Lord.

But our highest conception of a human being is not yet reached. To complete our model man, or to make him what every thoroughly regenerate man must be, it is necessary to add to our conception a third element,

and that is—*action*. It is necessary that love in the will be united to truth in the understanding, and that these go forth unitedly and ultimate themselves in a life of *active usefulness*. In other words, your perfect man, or one having the measure of an angel, must not be a do-nothing or an idler in this world of ours. He must be a *worker*—must *perform uses*. Indeed he cannot help working, since it is the very nature of love and wisdom, when united in the soul, to go forth and ultimate themselves in acts of beneficence and mercy. Therefore a good and regenerate man is, and must be, a busy man. His heart being full of love to the Lord—which involves also disinterested love to the neighbor—and his understanding full of the truths of wisdom which teach him what is really good for his neighbor, and how to do it, he cannot fold his hands and sit idle. He must be ever active—ever going forth on errands of mercy—ever engaged in the performance of beneficent deeds—ever busy about his Father's business—ever striving faithfully to discharge his duty in whatever sphere Providence has placed him ; for this, he knows, is just what his Heavenly Father desires him to do. All his acts, therefore, being performed under the prompting influence of love—love to the Lord and to the neighbor—and according to the truths of wisdom, must needs be good acts, tending to enlighten, improve, elevate, and bless hnmanity.

Here, then, we have our model man complete. Here we have the angelic standard of true manhood —“the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.” I

quite agree with you in your remarks, that "the heart is the capitol"—that "manhood is in the heart;"—also in the belief you express that true human greatness can only be reached where there is true human love. But although love is the first and highest element, it is not *all* that is necessary to perfect manhood. It is as needful that this be united with wisdom, as that heat be united with light, or the heart with the lungs. And when so united, then they must go forth and embody themselves in ultimate and useful *acts*. A man with a pure and loving will, with a good and enlightened understanding, and with a life of active usefulness in accordance therewith—does not such a man realize your ideal of a human being? What more is necessary to his essential and true manhood? What more do you expect in a thoroughly regenerate man? What more in an angel? And does not such a man fulfill your highest conception of what is demanded by that language of the Bible which represents him as originally created in the image and likeness of God? And will any thing *less* than this satisfy the demands of such language? Nay, will any thing less satisfy the demands of your own language, where you speak of the importance and necessity of "right *thinking*," based upon right *living*," to one who would truly "find out God?" If, as I suppose, in your idea of "right *living*," is involved right *willing* and right *acting*, then it is as if you had said, "Let a man *think* right, *will* right, and *act* right, then he will find out God. And why? Clearly because he will then be like Him—will then be an image of Him. And as only like ones

can comprehend or see like ones, this is the only way in which God can be found out." As you have justly remarked: "That is the way you are going to see God—by your own consciousness, and the qualities in you answering to a like consciousness and to like qualities in Him."

These *three*, then, *will*, *understanding*, and *action*, are what essentially constitute *man*. These enter into every one's idea—into your own idea—of man. And each too, is alike essential to the idea. Take away either one of these elements, and the idea conveyed by the term *man* is destroyed. Therefore the trinity in man is the union of three *essential* elements. And although we can think and speak of each element separately, we know that they have not, and cannot have, any separate and independent existence; just as with the sun, while we may think and speak of the heat, the light, and their proceeding operation, separately, we know that neither can have any existence apart from the other two; and the moment we attempt to think of either as withdrawn, or as having a separate and independent existence, that moment we destroy in our minds the very idea of the sun as a luminous and caloric body. We say, therefore, that heat, light, and their proceeding operation, are each alike essential to the very existence of the sun *as a sun*. And in like manner we affirm that will, understanding and action, are each alike essential to the existence of man *as man*.

We thus see that this finite human trinity is by no means fanciful or arbitrary. It is not an invention of

human ingenuity, but is founded in the very nature and constitution of the human spirit. It is the union of three elements, each of which is absolutely *essential* to the existence of a human being. These three elements stand related to each other like end, cause, and effect—like love, wisdom, and use—like heat, light, and their proceeding operation—or like the heart, lungs, and their reciprocal action. Who does not know that the heart cannot exist as a vital organ, performing all the functions of a heart, without the lungs, and the activity resulting from their vital union? Neither can the lungs exist without the heart; nor can there be any reciprocal action without the union of them both. The same is true of heat, light, and their proceeding operation; for neither of these can exist without the other two. And we may say the same of love, wisdom and use, or of affection, thought, and action. Moreover the will is the receptacle of all that a man loves or calls good; and the understanding is the receptacle of all that he thinks or calls true (wisdom); and their action is the receptacle of their use or power, or is the method by which the will and understanding seek to embody themselves in an ultimate form. So that every work which a man does, is but an effect of the combined activity of his will and understanding, or, what is the same, of his love and wisdom. And the character of every work—so far, I mean, as the individual himself is concerned—will, of course, depend upon the quality of his will, or of the love that rules therein. If his ruling love be the love of the Lord—in other words, if the prevailing

desire and purpose of his heart be to do the Lord's will by performing deeds of true benevolence or use to the neighbor—then his love is good, and of course his work also is good. But if his ruling love be the love of himself—that is, if it be his prevailing desire and purpose to do only his own will without regard to the good of others—then his love is evil and his work, in itself considered, is evil, be the outward appearance whatever it may. In the one case he is a true, in the other an inverted, image of the Lord ; for in the one instance the love is similar, while in the other it is opposite, to the love which the Lord feels and forever exercises toward his creatures.

I flatter myself that I have now succeeded in making this finite human trinity quite intelligible to your mind. And you see, my brother, that it is not a trinity of *persons*, yet one of *essentials*. It is, moreover, a perfectly rational and intelligible trinity, and one which is seen to rest upon a foundation as solid and enduring as the soul itself. Can you show, according to any fair argument or sound philosophy, that your *personal* trinity is equally essential, or that it rests upon an equally substantial foundation ? Try, and see if you can.

Now this human trinity—such as I have shown to exist in every good and regenerate man—I take to be a perfect image of the Divine Trinity. I look at this trinity in man, and I learn from it the true nature of the trinity in God: I feel that if I know anything of God from what I find in my own being that answers to a like quality in Him—be the likeness never sc



faint—then I *know*, from this trinity in myself, what is the nature of the Divine Trinity. And how else, let me ask, are we to learn the true nature of that Trinity? How, even according to your own admission? For you declare that “no man can know one whit more of God than he possesses in his own being.” And if there be in man such a trinity as I have shown to exist, why should we be unwilling to admit that the Divine Trinity must resemble this human one in its essential nature? How, indeed, can the inference be resisted, since the Scripture assures us that man was originally created, and is now, since the fall, to be *re*-created, in God’s own image? How, especially, can *you* deny the justice and necessity of this inference, after saying, as you have said, “that man was made in the image of God, in order, as we suppose, that he might understand Him?” Do you say it was never intended that we should understand the nature of the Divine Trinity? What right have you to say this? What authority for so believing or teaching? It is, I am aware, and has long been, quite a popular saying among Christians; but you, no doubt, will admit that it is none the less likely, on that account, to involve a popular error. How know you but a right understanding of the true nature of that trinal distinction which exists in God, may lead to most important practical results? However that may be, I feel that I have abundant Scripture warrant for believing and saying that the trinity in man, such as I have here explained, is as much like the trinity in God, as our human love, or any other attribute of

our human nature, is like God's love, or any corresponding attribute of the Divine nature. And you believe that LOVE is the grand and distinguishing characteristic of the Divine Being ; and that, in the language of the apostle, "He that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God and God in him." You believe that true human love in men so nearly resembles God's love in its essential nature, that we may be said to understand and *know* God in the degree that we have this love ; and that we can truly understand Him in no other way. For, after saying—and I agree with you entirely—"that love in me is no fit measure of the depth, or the breadth, or the length, or the versatility of the love of God," you add : "but yet it is a true criterion by which to judge of the essential quality of love in God." You also say, "that if you know what disinterested love is, then you know the kind of love that God feels." And again : "The spiritual and higher nature of man is really, absolutely like God's ;" and "we can comprehend God only to the degree that His power, in-dwelling in us, causes our higher nature to act as His nature acts, thus rendering us interpreters of Him." This is perfectly true ; and you might have cited, in confirmation of its truth, those beautiful words of the Apostle, "Beloved, let us love one another ; for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God. He that loveth not, *knoweth not* God ; for God is love."

But is not God Wisdom or Truth, as well as Love or Goodness ? His wisdom is infinite ; and therefore we say He is omniscient. And although His wisdom

does not, and cannot exist apart from His love, any more than light can exist apart from heat, yet we can contemplate it as a distinct element in the Divine Being. The distinction between the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom is as clear as that between human affection and human thought, or between the will and the understanding of man. And pursuing one step further the excellent line of argument in your sermon—a step which I think you cannot consistently forbid—should we not say, that truth in a regenerate human mind is so like truth in the Divine mind, or that the wisdom in a righteous man's understanding is so like the wisdom of God, that the former may be taken as a "true criterion by which to judge" of the essential nature or quality of the latter? What, indeed, can we really know of the Divine Wisdom, save as that wisdom is revealed in our own souls—in the thoughts or truths which illumine our understanding?

And may we not also—going a step further—make the same remarks in reference to God's power, and the true mode of comprehending it, or forming any idea of it? The power of a good and thoroughly regenerate soul—the power of disinterested love in the will operating in conjunction with genuine truth in the understanding—can anything give us a better idea of God's power than this? Does not the nature of this power—finite and feeble as it is—illustrate completely the nature of the Divine omnipotence? How else can we rightly understand the power of God, or where else shall we go to learn its true nature? Nor does the nature of the Divine power as

thus taught us, appear to differ materially from your own idea of it as set forth in your sermon. You reject very decidedly the old idea of a God of "monarchic power and physical grandeur"—of a God whose greatness is supposed to consist "in the great strength of his muscle." You even flout this idea, justly characterizing it as "false," "gross," "vulgar," and "barbaric." Nor do you believe that God's greatness or omnipotence consists in mere intellectual power, or that He is "a being of immense intellect" alone. Yet you do not believe Him to be an unintelligent Being—a Being *without* intellect. On the contrary, you believe His intellect to be great and unfathomable, comprehending in its stupendous grasp, all truth, all knowledge, all wisdom. But you believe that mighty intellect to exist in close and indissoluble union with another attribute, quite distinct from it, and of a nature superior to it. You believe it to be united with a will of equal amplitude and power—with love or justice infinitely holy, pure, and perfect. How else am I to interpret your language when you say, "Though I cannot worship a God of mere omnipotence, or vast intelligence, or right-handed justice—yet when I see a God with omnipotence, intelligence, and justice, who could be so unselfish and so noble as to give himself for the weak, the despised, and the down-trodden, and lift them up into the majesty of his own nature, I cannot help adoring him." By God's justice, I suppose you here mean His love in exercise; for you have elsewhere in your sermon spoken of love as the noblest attribute of the Divine Being; and I

cannot, therefore, suppose you meant to overlook this in the brief summary here given of the attributes of that God whom you "cannot help adoring." Besides, what else is pure justice but pure love—love of the right, the good, and the true?—such love as finds its full satisfaction only in ultimate acts—in the *practice* of the right and the true? God's mercy, too,—what is this but a manifestation of His love? And so of His goodness, tenderness, forbearance, condescension, and all the other attributes of which you speak. If such, then, be your meaning of justice in the sentence just quoted, it is as if you had said, "When I see a God with omnipotence [power], intelligence [wisdom], and justice [pure and unselfish love] united, I believe in Him, and cannot help adoring Him." And if this shows that you already believe in, and adore—apparently without being conscious of it—the very Trinity whose nature I am endeavoring to unfold and make plain, it is all the more gratifying to me. But I would suggest for your serious consideration, whether, in that case—supposing this trinal distinction of love, wisdom, and power, to exist in each of your three *persons* in the Godhead—you have not a *compound* trinity, or a trinity of trinities, in the God of whom you are thinking ;—*nine* instead of *three* "somewhats," to use a term which Dr. Stuart would substitute for that of *persons* in the Trinity.

Will, understanding, and action, then, constitute the trinity in every finite human being. And with every regenerate man, whose heart has become the receptacle of disinterested love, and his understanding the recep-

tacle of heavenly wisdom, and his life conformable thereto, this trinity is the union of love, wisdom, and use. You will concede, I think, that this trinity is exceedingly simple and easily understood. At the same time it is one about which we need have no doubt—one, of whose existence and nature we are as certain as we are of the existence of the soul itself. And what is easier than to learn from this the nature of the Divine Trinity? Why should we perplex ourselves about so plain a subject, or suffer our minds to be confused or entangled in a web of mystery and contradiction, by the speculations or decrees of men who lived many hundred years ago? Why, especially, should we do this, when the soul itself is an open book, in which we may read, if we will, the solution of this mystery? Seeing too, that God himself, by teaching us that he made man originally in His own image, and now regenerates or *re-creates* him in the same divine likeness, has clearly indicated the direction in which we ought to look, if we would learn His true nature and character. To see clearly the nature of the trinity in God, we have only to look at the image of that trinity in ourselves. We have only to conceive the trinity existing in every regenerate or regenerating man to be infinitely expanded, and we have the Divine Trinity. . Let our finite human love—such love, I mean, as dwells in the heart of a regenerate man—be increased without limit, let it be infinitely augmented in purity, amplitude, and power, and what have we but the Divine Love? Let our finite human wisdom (the truths in our understanding) be aug-

mented in like manner and degree, so as to embrace all truth and all knowledge in all spheres and throughout all worlds, and what have we but the Divine Wisdom? And let our finite human power—the power of a good will operating in conjunction with a wise or enlightened understanding, and so ultimating itself in useful acts—in deeds of kindness, beneficence, and good will to men—be increased to infinity, and what have we but the Divine Power?

Divine Love, Divine Wisdom, and Divine Power, therefore, or what is the same, Divine Goodness, Divine Truth, and their Divine Proceeding Operation, constitute the Divine Trinity. And since the love in the heart of a regenerate man is an image of the Divine Love, and the wisdom in his understanding is an image of the Divine Wisdom, and his sphere of active usefulness is an image of God's operative energy, or of the sphere of the Divine Activity, therefore such a man is a true image and likeness of God, having in himself a complete image of the Divine Trinity.

Pardon me, my brother, if, in my anxiety to make myself understood, I become somewhat tedious. The subject is of too great magnitude and importance, and involving, as we shall see in the sequel, issues of too great moment as affecting the popular theology, to be hastily passed over, or properly discussed within narrow limits. I have something further to say on the point argued in this letter—further illustrations to present, and further Scripture evidence to offer. But the already excessive length of this epistle, admonishes

me of the propriety of postponing to another time what further remarks I have to make on this point. Hoping, therefore, that you will give to what I have here said that candid consideration which it merits, I remain, as ever,

Your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARRETT.

*Orange, August 3, 1859.*



## LETTER IV.

FURTHER EVIDENCE AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE  
TRINITY.

MY DEAR SIR :—It was the purpose of my last letter to explain the nature of that trinal distinction in man, which I hold to be a true image, and therefore a fit interpreter, of the trinal distinction in God. And I showed that this finite human trinity is by no means arbitrary or fanciful—no cunning device of man's wisdom—but the union of three *essentials* in one *person*. We cannot conceive of a human being existing *as a human being*, without a will, an understanding, and their proceeding operation, any more than we can conceive of a living human body existing *as such*, without heart, lungs, and their reciprocal action. There is a great truth, then, in the remark of one of the early Christian Fathers (Augustine) who said : "Every man, as created in the image of God, carries about him a kind of emblem of the divine nature, in the three-fold distinction of his own." Nay, much more than "a kind of emblem"—a complete *image* of the three-fold distinction in God.—But I did not, in my last letter, conclude what I wished to say on this point, and therefore crave your indulgence in a few further remarks.

I have said that the will of man, when regenerate—

when renewed "after the image of Him that created him"—is an image of the Divine Will ; or, what is the same, that disinterested love in the finite human will, is an image of that Divine Love which dwells in or constitutes the infinite will of God ; that wisdom or truth in the finite human understanding, is an image of that Divine Wisdom which dwells in or constitutes the infinite understanding of God ; and that our finite human power, resulting from the union of will and understanding, is an image of the infinite Divine Power. I now go further, and say—and I cannot doubt but you will agree with me here—that all the love, wisdom, and power in man, is momentarily received from God. Disinterested love in us is not our own, nor of our originating. We can no more originate one spark of love, than we can originate life, or create a world. We are mere recipient subjects—endowed with the power, it is true, of modifying, perverting or suffocating what we receive. Every spark of love in us flows into our souls from the Divine Love, and should be acknowledged as a precious gift from the Lord. And so with every ray of truth in the human understanding. Not a single truth is properly ours—not one originates in ourselves. We have no wisdom of our own, but all we have is every moment received from the Divine Wisdom ; and no man is truly wise, who does not perceive and acknowledge this. So likewise with our finite human power : This, too, is the momentary gift of God—an influx into us from the Divine Power. If God's power were for one moment withdrawn, we could not move a muscle nor draw a

single breath ; and this also should be heartily acknowledged. So true is it that " in Him we live, and move, and have our being " (*Acts* xvii. 28) ; and that *without* Him, we can do nothing (*John* xv. 5).

Not only, then, is that finite human trinity—that distinction of love, wisdom, and power, in man—an image of the Divine Trinity, but it has its origin in that Trinity. It exists from it, and could not have derived its existence from any other source. In other words there *could not be* any such trinal distinction in the finite creature man, as I have shown to exist, if there were not a corresponding trine of a like nature in the Infinite Creator. And if our human love, wisdom, and power, do not originate in ourselves, but flow into us every moment from the Lord, then there *must* exist in Him a trine of just such a nature as this which we find in ourselves. And if there is a clear distinction between love, wisdom, and power, in us—if will, understanding, and action, are not to be confounded in man—then the distinction between the three corresponding elements in the Divine Being must be equally clear, and the three be equally incapable of being confounded in Him. So that this trinity in man is an ever present revelation of the nature of the trinity in God. It is, so to speak, the ever present and living God, revealing, as in an image, the exact nature of that trinal distinction which eternally exists in Himself.

Furthermore—what is implied by that union or oneness between man and his Maker, which Christians so devoutly yearn after, which the Bible encourages the

faithful to hope for, and which many feel that they have had the happiness already to attain? What is that union of the disciples with the indwelling Father and Son, to which our Saviour refers when he prays "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." And again, when He says: "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches." This, undoubtedly, is that union with Christ, of which Christians so often speak, and for which they so fervently pray; a union, which, when full and complete, is the soul's own Sabbath-day—a state of inward peace and rest such as the world cannot give. What is this union? Can it be any other than such a union of our minds with the Divine Mind, that every wish, thought, and deed of ours shall be in accordance with the Divine requirements? Such a union, that our will shall be completely swallowed up, as it were, in the Divine will?—that we shall have no will of our own, but find our highest delight in doing the will of the Lord? When the selfish dispositions and feelings of the natural man are completely subdued—when God has taken up His abode in our hearts, and dwells within us in such fullness that our own life is lost, as it were, in His life—when we love only what He loves, and love to do only what He loves to have us do, then our souls are at-one with Him, and we enjoy that rest which is promised to the people of God. Then we live in Him,

and He in us, and we understand the full import of the Saviour's declaration, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." But to do, and take delight in doing, God's will, implies that we *understand* His will, so far at least as relates to ourselves. His will to man is expressed in his Word; and although in the first stages of regeneration, we are obliged to *compel ourselves* to obey the precepts of the Word, we at last, through this self-compelled labor, acquire the victory over our disorderly and selfish inclinations, and come into a state of genuine love—a state in which we *delight* to do God's will, and when it may be said that we dwell in His love and His love dwells in us. Agreeable to these words of the Lord: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." And the Apostle John says: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." And when the *heart* is right in the sight of God—when our single and abiding purpose is to do His will,—then He flows into the understanding with the light of His wisdom, and thus makes known His will to us; for it is in all cases the selfish and evil loves in the will, which darken the understanding by shutting out all spiritual illumination, or changing truth into falsity. Hence the Lord says: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

This union or at-onement of the soul with Christ, then, what is it but the indwelling of the Divine life in us, and the outworking of that life in corresponding forms of use and beauty? What is it but the union of

that trine in us, of love, wisdom, and use, with the corresponding trine in God? When our wills are so conformed to the Divine will that we love only what He loves, and desire to be and to do only what He desires to have us, and when our understandings are so imbued with the Divine Wisdom, that we can clearly see what it is that God desires us to be and to do, and when our sphere of life is conformable thereto—our actions prompted by heavenly love and guided by heavenly wisdom—then is our union with Christ complete. Then is the truth of the Apostle's declaration fulfilled in us: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;"—yes, "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." Then may we say with the same Apostle: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." But how plain is it to see that our union with Him cannot be complete, if either element in that trine which we have seen to be essential to perfect manhood, be wanting.

It is hardly necessary to attempt to *prove* the existence of such a trinal distinction in God, as that which we find revealed in man. For what Christian does not believe already that the Divine Being is a Being of infinite Love, Wisdom, and Power? The Bible declares that "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." And in passages too numerous to mention, His *will* is spoken of which Paul characterizes as "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;"—*perfect*, because He wills nothing save what His infinitely pure and perfect

love prompts. The Bible also represents God as infinitely *wise*, as well as infinitely *good* ; as having created all things—the earth and the heavens—by His wisdom ; as being Wisdom itself and Truth itself, and as giving to men all the wisdom they possess : for His Word is truth ; and “the Word,” it is said, “was in the beginning with God.” And the Psalmist assures us that “His understanding is infinite.” And how often, too, does the Bible speak of God’s power and omnipotence. How often is He called “the Almighty” and “God Almighty.” “For the Lord God *omnipotent* reigneth,” was a part of that song of praise and thanksgiving which the Revelator heard from the lips of the angelic host, when he was in the spirit on the Lord’s day. And the Psalmist says, “that power belongeth unto God,” and that He is “girded with power ;” also that “He giveth strength and power unto his people.” Yea, there is no power in the universe which belongeth *not* unto God ;—no power in man to think, to will, or to act, save what he receives every moment from the Divine Power. Therefore we are taught, when we pray, to ascribe unto God “the kingdom, and the *power*, and the glory forever.” And you yourself, when speaking of the three Persons in the Godhead, have declared your belief “that these three Beings” possess “separate and distinct *understandings*,” and “separate and distinct *wills*.” And although in this connection you have said nothing of God’s *power*, I conclude that the omission was purely inadvertent, since you have repeatedly spoken of it in other parts of your sermon. Thus you say : “We can comprehend

God only to the degree that His *power*, indwelling in us, causes our higher nature to act as His nature acts, thus rendering us interpreters of Him." You believe then, that God is a Being of *power*, as well as of will and understanding ; and not only so, but that when our higher nature *acts* as His nature acts, the action is purely the result of the indwelling of *His* power in us. (Nor do I suppose it is your belief that even our *lower* nature has any power of its own to act, save what it receives by influx every moment from the Lord.) And herein your belief is clearly in agreement with the teachings of Scripture. The Bible is full and explicit upon this subject. It teaches that God is a Divine Being or Person ; and you, in your sermon, have declared that no man can form any conception of God except as a person. "An *impersonal* God, such as fancy imagines—a vast diffusive power—the essence or the life of the universe—a spiritual vitality"—such as the philosophic pantheism of our times is prone to represent, you justly characterize as "trashy nonsense"—"mere fantastic moonshine." And as a person, the Bible represents God as possessing the *three essential attributes* of a person—will, understanding and action. It teaches that He is LOVE, and the source of all the love that dwells in the bosoms of men and angels. It teaches that He is WISDOM, and the fountain of all the wisdom in finite minds. It teaches that He is POWER, and the source and centre of all the power in the universe. These are the three great *personal* attributes ascribed to God in many parts of His own Word, and whose existence is im-



plied on every page. These, therefore, are the three attributes which the Divine Being himself has been pleased to reveal unto men. And has He, I ask, revealed any *other* attributes as existing in, or belonging to, His own divine Person?—any attributes, I mean, not flowing from, or clearly comprehended in, the three I have mentioned? Can you imagine a single one? The Bible, indeed, tells us of God's goodness, and mercy, and forbearance, and compassion, and long-suffering, and forgiveness; of His knowledge, and foresight, and greatness, and majesty, and glory. But it is easy to see that each of these attributes is as clearly comprehended in the three essentials of which I have spoken, and is merely one of their varied manifestations, as that tenderness, forbearance, pity, and forgiveness in man, are but the varied manifestations of love and wisdom in the finite human being.

You speak, I know, of a "separate and distinct *conscience*," as belonging to each of your three *Persons* in the Godhead; but this is your own language, and is, I submit, wholly unauthorized by divine Revelation. The Bible nowhere speaks of God's *conscience*. And what is *conscience* in man? Not a separate and distinct faculty, surely, but a perception or judgment of our own actions—as good or bad, right or wrong—and a consequent inward approval or condemnation of the same, or of ourselves on account of them. And who cannot see that such perception or judgment, accompanied by such inward approval or condemnation, depends in all cases upon the state of the heart and the head?—that is, upon the quality of love in

the will, and of wisdom in the understanding? Every one's *conscience*, therefore, is according to the degree of his enlightenment and spiritual renovation—which is only another way of saying, it is according to the state of his understanding and will. Else, how shall we explain the well-known fact, that the very same acts performed by different persons brought up in the same community, but *differently educated*, are regarded by them very differently?—*so* differently, indeed, that while some regard them as innocent and right—having been so educated—others, differently instructed, cannot perform them without experiencing what is called the rebuke of conscience—an inward condemnation? Conscience, then, is no separate and distinct faculty; but is a result of the combined activity of will and understanding. Therefore it is good or bad, healthy or morbid, tender or hard, sensitive or obtuse, according to the degree in which the will is purified and the understanding illumined.

And not only does the Bible, from beginning to end, affirm that trinal distinction in God of which I have spoken, and whose nature I have endeavored to explain, but the created universe everywhere proclaims the self-same doctrine. For Love, Wisdom, and Power divine, are legibly stamped on all God's works. In every object of creation, from the great sun that warms and enlightens us, down to the smallest atom that quivers in his beams, there exists a vital force—a kind of *will-principle*—united at the same time with an *intelligence*, which guides it with undeviating certainty to the fulfilment of its destined *use*. What is

there throughout the broad realms of nature, that does not speak to us of the love and wisdom and power of God? And may we not learn, from the visible things of creation, the invisible things of the Creator? Evidently the great Apostle to the Gentiles so believed, when he wrote, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20.) Yes: even his *Godhead*, says Paul, may be understood by the things that are made—the outward and visible things of the created universe. Yet, strange to say, in the face of this explicit declaration of the Apostle, the majority of theologians have settled down in the conviction that the nature of the trinal distinction in the Godhead is a profound mystery—something which no human intellect can grasp or take cognizance of—something which has no analogy in man or nature—something which *cannot* be seen or "understood by the things that are made!" And should not this obvious conflict between our theologians and the Apostle, lead the former to a careful and prayerful re-examination of their doctrine of the Trinity? Should it not lead them to suspect that the *nature* of the trine in the Godhead has been totally misapprehended?

But there is no conflict between this language of Paul, and that kind of trinity in God which I am advocating. On the contrary, the Apostle's declaration is fully justified by what I regard as the true doctrine on this subject. I contend that the trine in

the Godhead, or the nature of that trine, *may* be "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And among the things of creation what single object presents itself to our minds as a fitter symbol or representation in this lower sphere, of the Divine Being, than the sun itself? The sun is to the natural, what God is to the spiritual world. As the sun is the centre of our planetary system, so God is the centre of every well-regulated moral system—every orderly community or society of human beings. As the sun is the quickener and sustainer of all natural growths, so God is the quickener and sustainer of all moral growths—the inspirer of all those heavenly thoughts and affections, which spring up and blossom in the soul, and bring forth the precious fruits of righteousness. As all animal and vegetable life becomes torpid when the solar influences are withdrawn or shut out, and after a time sickens and dies, so, in the absence of God's quickening influence, does the soul become torpid, and at last pine away and die as to all true spiritual life. The sun, too, is present with his heat and light in all parts of the solar system, thereby illustrating the omnipresence of God. Therefore the sun is an appropriate symbol of the Divine Being, and is so used in the Sacred Scripture. "For the Lord God," says the Psalmist, "is a *sun* and shield." And one of the inspired prophets calls him "the *sun* of righteousness." He is the sun of the spiritual world, and no doubt so appears to the eyes of angels, but with ten-fold more brilliancy than our sun appears to us. What else could it have been but the beams

of that Divine Sun, which Paul saw on his way to Damascus, when his spiritual eye was couched, and the light of the upper spheres burst upon him in dazzling splendor?—when, as he says in his speech before King Agrippa, “At mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me.”

Reason and Scripture, therefore—and I might add, the common perception of all enlightened minds—concur in teaching, that among all created things in this lower sphere, the sun is the fittest emblem and best representative of the Creator Himself. And if there be a trinity in God, the sun, therefore, ought—next to man, the declared image of his Maker—to furnish the most striking illustration of that trinity. And so, indeed, it does. I have already alluded—incidentally, and by way of illustration—to that trinal distinction in the sun, of heat, light, and their proceeding operation. These are not *three suns*, but three essentials in *one* sun. Three *essentials*, I say, because each is alike necessary to the very existence of the sun. And this solar trinity furnishes a complete illustration of the Divine Trinity. The solar heat illustrates the Divine Love, with which also it perfectly corresponds; for the effects wrought by the sun’s heat throughout the domains of nature, correspond in all respects to the effects of God’s love throughout the realms of spirit. His love, indeed, *is* spiritual heat, and no doubt is perceived in heaven as a real and life-giving warmth. What else but this

love can Christians mean by that *heavenly fire*, with which they so often pray that God would warm their hearts? Or what else by that fire of the Lord of which the prophet speaks and which he declares "*is in Zion*" (Is. xxxi. 9)—that is in the Church—in the hearts of His people? And the solar light illustrates with equal clearness and precision the Divine Wisdom, or God's glorious and all enlightening truth. We may say also, that the sun's light corresponds to God's wisdom or truth; for the operations and effects of this light in the natural sphere, correspond in all respects to the operations and effects of God's truth in the spiritual. Moreover, truth *is* spiritual light, and undoubtedly appears as light to the angels. For it is said: "They need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the *Lord God* giveth them light" (Rev. xxii. 5). What else, too, but spiritual light—the light of divine truth—can the Psalmist refer to, when he says: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a *light* unto my path;" "The Lord is my *light* and my salvation?" Or the prophet, when he says: "For the Lord shall be thine everlasting *light*;" "The Gentiles shall come to thy *light*;" "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great *light*," &c. ? And the Apostle John declares, that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5). And another apostle calls those, whose minds have been illumined by God's truth, "the children of *light*, and the children of the day" (1 Thess. v. 5). And do not Christians often pray that God would give them *light*, when their meaning is, that he would communicate His truth to their

understandings—would give them spiritual light?—So, too, the constant operation of the sun's heat and light, and their joint effects throughout the realms of matter, illustrate the divine proceeding operation of the Lord's love and wisdom, and their effects throughout the realms of spirit; for the power of the one corresponds exactly to the power of the other.

So perfectly does the sun, the most striking emblem of the Divine Being to be found in all the domains of nature, illustrate, by its heat, light, and their joint operation, the nature of that trinal distinction in God, whereof the Bible speaks, and which it is the object of these letters to unfold and explain! Verily, then, may we affirm with the Apostle, that "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world *are clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Yes: even the nature of the trinity in God, about which theologians have so long perplexed themselves and vexed each other, may be clearly seen and understood by the things that are made.

But I anticipate the difficulty which may still linger in your mind, even if I could flatter myself that I have been so fortunate as to win your assent to most that I have thus far said: It is, to see clearly how the language of the New Testament, upon whose teachings the popular doctrine of the Trinity is supposed to rest, is to be reconciled with the view of the subject such as I have here presented. The New Testament, you will say, sets before us a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—apparently three *Persons*. And

you may not readily perceive how this is to be satisfactorily expounded in accordance with the New Doctrine. I do not propose to leave this point unexplained; and I hope, before finally dismissing the subject, to be able to remove from your mind all reasonable objections, based upon any supposed teachings of the Bible, against the doctrine I am advocating. Previously, however, I must claim your indulgence while I consider the subject under another aspect; and that is, with reference to its *practical* bearings, or the obvious tendency and legitimate influence of the Old and New view respectively upon Christian life and character. To this aspect of the subject I propose to invite your kind but serious attention in my next letter. Meanwhile I remain

Truly your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARRETT.

*Orange, August 25, 1859.*



## LETTER V.

## PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF THE NEW DOCTRINE.

MY DEAR SIR :—If my letters to you should prove somewhat tedious, I trust you will look with indulgence upon this fault, and find, at least, some apology for it in the importance of the theme, and in the anxiety which I feel to make myself clearly understood. I am well aware that, through a desire to be explicit, and a fear of leaving my own view of the subject in any ambiguous or doubtful light, I am in danger of being betrayed into a wearisome prolixity. But I hope you will not allow this to prevent you from carefully pursuing the chain of my argument, and weighing with candor the conclusions reached.

Having explained and illustrated, as well as I am able, what I regard as the true doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity, I proceed now, agreeable to the promise in my last letter, to exhibit the *practical* bearings of this new doctrine.

And here let me say that I regard this as one of the surest tests of the truth or the falsity of any doctrine—viz., *its legitimate practical tendency*. For, what is the *end* of all doctrine? What is the object that religious teachers have in view in all their doctrinal instruction? For no one, I presume, regards doctrine

itself as an *end*. It is not proclaimed simply as an intellectual exercise, nor set forth merely as a thing to be gazed at and admired, or as the means of furnishing a healthy excitement to the intellect. When you preach any doctrine to your people, you expect, or at least *desire* them to believe it. Nor would you, I suppose, be quite satisfied to have the doctrine you teach merely find a lodgment in the intellect. You expect, or at least desire, that it may first be believed and then *obeyed*. You probably would regard the mere *believing* of any doctrine, however true or important, as of small consequence, unless such belief be followed by obedience. What you wish, doubtless is, that your people may *live* the doctrine you teach, or the truth they believe—for no truth, I take it, has fully accomplished its mission to the soul, until it has, through obedience, become inwrought into the life and character. A doctrine may be true, and of the utmost importance; but so long as it finds a lodgment *only* in the intellect, it is barren of results—it has not accomplished the end for which it was given—it is as useless as would be the science of arithmetic, music, or agriculture, if never reduced to practice.

All doctrine, then, is to be regarded not as an *end*, but simply as a *means* to an end—and that end is *life*. Doctrine—I speak here of religious doctrine—may be considered as the science of spiritual life; and, like all other sciences, of no value unless reduced to practice. It addresses itself to the intellect—the eye of the mind—and is as a guide-post to point us the way to heaven. But of what use is it to know the way,

unless we walk in it? Why is the doctrine you preach preferable to that preached by Brigham Young or Parker Pillsbury? Simply because its effect upon the life and character is preferable—because it exerts a more quickening, elevating, and purifying influence—because it leads more directly to the formation and nurture of a pure and holy life—because it tends more strongly to the repression of the baser, and the development of the nobler qualities of our nature, and thus to the attainment of a more perfect manhood. Your doctrine concerning the Lord, for example, which represents Him as a Being of pure and unselfish love,—what advantage has it over “that view of God which measures Him by his great right arm merely,” and which you justly characterize as “barbaric and low?” Undoubtedly this, that its *influence* is better;—that its tendency is to lift men up from a low, barbaric condition, into one nearer allied to that of the angels.

*Life*, then, I take to be the *end* of all doctrine. And in this I am happy to know that you fully agree with me; for in a sermon of yours published in the *Independent* of Sept. 22d, you say; “All doctrine is itself to be tried by its power of producing *life*.” And again you say: “The *end* of the law is *love out of a pure heart*”—that is, pure and unselfish love, such as dwells in the bosom of angels, and images the Divine. This being conceded, we may assume, as a sure and safe test of any doctrine, its obvious practical tendency. If the doctrine, when *carried out in practice*, is seen to exert a beneficent influence, or if its evident ten-

dency is to develope a higher and nobler manhood, and so to lead the believer onward and upward in the path to heaven, then the doctrine cannot be false ; and if its legitimate tendency be clearly the opposite of this, that is evidence that the doctrine cannot be true. "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." But if its tendency appears to be of a neutral character, or if the doctrine be mysterious and incomprehensible, and as such, one that exerts no influence either good or evil upon the heart of the believer, then, to say the least of it, the doctrine is doubtful. It is of no consequence what our mental attitude be in regard to it. We may reject it, and be not a whit worse for the rejection ; we may accept it, or *profess* to accept it, and be not a whit better. For the doctrine, according to our supposition, is admitted to be *not a doctrine of life* ; therefore the life cannot be at all affected either by our acceptance or rejection of it.

Assuming the test here laid down to be correct, I come now to apply it to that doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity which I am advocating. For if all doctrine has relation to life, and the obvious tendency of any one, when reduced to practice, is to be taken as evidence of its truth or falsity, this ought to be eminently true of a doctrine so important and central as that concerning the Object of our worship, or concerning the nature of the trinity in God. We should expect that the true view of this subject would be found to have very important practical bearings, and

to lead directly to the most beneficent results. Let us look, then, at the plain practical tendency of this new doctrine of the Trinity. Let us see what the necessary result of the doctrine is, when carried out in practice, or when fairly applied to life.

You know that Christians have hitherto disagreed considerably upon the great question of man's salvation. They have differed in opinion, both as to the nature of this work, and the means by which it is accomplished. Some have maintained that *faith* is the all-essential thing, or that we are saved by *faith alone*. And it cannot be denied that there are passages in the Bible which do *appear* to favor this doctrine—nay, which appear to teach it very plainly. Take, for example, the following : “He that *believeth* and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that *believeth not*, shall be damned.” “Thy *faith* hath saved thee.” “He that heareth my words, and *believeth* on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” “*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by *faith*.” “For by grace are ye saved through *faith*”—and many more passages of similar purport.

Others have maintained that *belief* or *faith* is a matter of little consequence ;—that men are not saved by faith, but by *love* or *charity* ; and they, too, are ready to meet you with their proof texts. They cite in support of their doctrine, such passages as these : “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love* one to another.” “*Love* worketh no

ill to his neighbor ; therefore *love* is the fulfilling of the law." "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "And every one that *loveth* is born of God, and knoweth God." "And above all things put on *charity*, which is the bond of perfectness." "Now the end of the commandment is *charity*." "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not *charity*, I am nothing."

Others, again, have believed and taught the doctrine of salvation by *works*. Some ministers, you know, make *works* the burden of their preaching. And these, too, can quote numerous texts of Scripture in support of their view ; such, for example, as the following : "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord ! Lord ! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and *do* not the things which I say ?" "He shall render to every man according to his *works*." "I have not found thy *works* perfect before God." "Blessed are they that *do* His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their *works*."

Now it appears from all of the above texts, as if the Bible sometimes taught that men are saved by faith alone, sometimes by charity alone, and sometimes

by works alone. I say the Bible *appears* to teach these three different ways or means of salvation, just as it *appears* to teach the existence of three *persons* in the Godhead ; and the amount of Scripture evidence in support of each of these ways, is known to be nearly equal. What then? Shall we say that the Bible is really in conflict with itself upon this subject, as it appears to be? Or shall we not rather believe that there is a way of understanding the Bible, which reconciles all such apparent contradictions, and brings all parts of it to a tally? There were serious difficulties, you know—apparent contradictions—in our planetary system, which the old Ptolemaic theory of the heavens could not resolve nor account for ; but when Copernicus arose, and with true philosophic insight penetrated beyond mere *appearances*, how quickly did all former doubts and difficulties vanish! And it is worth remembering that all the difficulties under the ancient system of astronomy, arose from a mistaken doctrine or theory in regard to the sun's relative position—from a theory which mistook the *apparent* for the *real* truth. And is it not possible that some similar mistake may have been committed by the framers of our theological systems? May not theologians have erred in their doctrine concerning Him, whom the Scripture declares to be “the Light of the world?” May not some mistaken view concerning the great central Sun of the moral universe—some view based upon the mere sensuous appearances of truth in the letter of the Word—be the chief cause of all the confusion and perplexity in our old systems of theolo-

gy? May not the apparent contradictions and discrepancies—apparent only to such as are disposed to rest in mere appearances—in the Divine Word itself, be attributable mainly to this cause? And may not the true doctrine concerning the Lord, and the nature of the Trinity in Him, prepare a way of escape from the doubts and difficulties and contradictions in the old theologies, like as the new Copernican doctrine in regard to our planetary system and the sun's relative position therein, swept away the difficulties which embarrassed the old astronomies, and brought harmony out of discord, order out of confusion? I cannot doubt but it will.

And now let us see how the new doctrine of the Divine Trinity, such as I have all along been advocating, must affect the views of Christians in regard to the way of salvation. Let us see whether, in the light of this new doctrine, there be really any contradiction in the Bible on this subject; and whether, when Christians have a right understanding of the nature of the trinity in God, it is possible for them to differ, as they have heretofore, in regard to the means of salvation.

We assume that God alone is our salvation. This, indeed, is plainly taught in the Divine Word (see Ps. xxvii. 1; Is. xii. 2). We are saved, just in the degree that He dwells in us with a living and operative energy. We have no wisdom and no love that can be properly called *our own*; nor have we any power to shun evil or to do good, save what we momentarily receive from the Lord. All, therefore,



that there is of heaven in angels, or of the church in men, is from Him, and exists in consequence of His immediate presence in the soul, constituting what is termed vital union with Him. "I am the vine," He says, "ye are the branches." "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me—He that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." We are, then, as dependent upon the Lord for all true heavenly life, as the branch is dependent upon the trunk with which it is united for its natural life ; and it is of primary importance that this truth be perceived and acknowledged. Nay, more ; whatever of deliverance we experience from the powers of darkness, whatever of salvation from the falses and evils of hell, whatever of the light of wisdom, or the warmth of love, or of holy and devout aspiration we enjoy, whatever of the peace and joy and bliss of heaven we come to know, is all from the Lord, and is the Lord in us. "In me ye shall have peace." "My peace I give unto you." And has He not promised to come unto, and *make His abode with*, all those who love Him and keep His commandments ? (John xiv. 23.) Truly, then, may every true regenerating soul say with the inspired Psalmist, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." It is the presence and indwelling of Himself in the mind and heart of the

believer, that saves ; and without Him, salvation is not possible.

But there is a trinity in God—not of *persons*, I maintain, but of *essentials*—a trinity of Love, Wisdom, and Power. And because these are, each one of them, absolutely *essential* to the very existence of the Divine Being, just as will, understanding, and ability to act, are essential to the existence of a human being, or as heat, light, and their proceeding operation, are each essential to the existence of the sun, therefore the Lord cannot really dwell in the soul of man, unless He dwell there as to each and all the elements of the trinity existing in Himself. His love cannot exist apart from His wisdom, nor His wisdom apart from his love, nor either of these apart from the operative energy or holy proceeding which belongs to their nature, any more than, with the sun, heat can exist apart from light, or light apart from heat, or either of these apart from the proceeding and joint operation of them both. True, the sun's heat seems to be separated or withdrawn from his light in the winter season ; but this is merely an appearance, and is caused by the face of the earth being turned away from the sun, so that his beams fall more obliquely. Yet the heat is there still, indissolubly and forever united with the light ; and its genial warmth and quickening influence are felt, soon as the earth returns to a position favorable to their reception. Her position with reference to the sun, or *her alienated face*, is what shuts out from her bosom his quickening warmth, and binds her in icy fetters. And there is a corresponding winter in the soul, springing, too, from a

corresponding cause. There is a state in which the understanding is enlightened, while the will is unsubdued—while the frosts of selfishness and death hold dominion in the heart. Yet still the Lord's love is in His truth, and is ever ready to flow into our hearts with its invigorating warmth, soon as our mental attitude is sufficiently changed, or our *alienated faces* are duly turned towards Him. Love, then, is never separated from its Wisdom, nor from its Holy Proceeding, in the Lord. In Him the three are eternally one. And in the degree that they are separated in man, man is separated from the Lord ; for he is not in the moral image of his Maker, and therefore not in spiritual conjunction with Him.

Now the Divine Love is the love of others out of itself. It is the love of imparting itself to others ; the love of doing good to others ; the love of saving and blessing the human race ; and this love, when duly received by man, becomes in him love of the neighbor, which is *charity*. And the Divine Wisdom is the wisdom, rule, or law, according to which the Divine Love operates, and forever seeks to accomplish its benignant purposes ; and this Wisdom, when received into the human understanding, becomes *faith* in man, or the truth by which his love of the neighbor is enlightened and guided in its operations. And the Divine Power or Holy Proceeding, which is the living energy or active operation of the Divine Love and Wisdom that forever seek to ultimate themselves in forms of use and beauty—this becomes in man a sphere of holy and active beneficence proceeding from his charity and faith.

or a life devoted to the good of humanity ; or, stated in language still more comprehensive—*good works*.

Thus it may be clearly seen, in the light of this new doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity, in what way or by what means it is that man is saved. Our doctrine leads, by a strict logical necessity, to the conclusion that man is not saved by faith alone, nor by charity alone, nor by works alone, but by *these three combined*. It shows us, indeed, that there is no such thing as faith *alone*, or charity *alone*, or good works *alone* ; for each of them, in order to be genuine, must be united with the other two. The three must exist together *in union*, like light, heat, and their proceeding operation, else man is not a true image of his Maker ; for when the Lord, who alone is our salvation, really dwells in us, He must dwell undivided—must dwell as to each element of that trinity which is essential to His own integrity. And all those in whom He thus dwells, are images and likenesses of Himself ; for their enlightened understandings are an image of the Divine Wisdom, their unselfish and loving hearts are an image of the Divine Love, and their good works, or lives of active usefulness, are an image of the Divine Beneficence, otherwise called the Divine Power or Holy Proceeding. But as the heart of the natural man is supremely selfish—as the love which we receive hereditarily, and which, as we advance to years of maturity, becomes our ruling love, is not pure and unselfish like the Lord's love, but quite the opposite—therefore we must be regenerated—born again—before we can enter the heavenly kingdom. The heart's dominant affections must be changed. *Our*

life—the old and over-mastering life of self-love—must be subdued, put away, *lost* as it were, and the life of genuine, disinterested love from the Lord, which is the only true human life, must be received in its stead. Agreeable to the Lord's own words, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it ;" that is, shall find his *true* life, in losing his natural, hereditary, selfish life. And this, doubtless, is what Paul meant, when he spoke of the need of "putting off the old man with his deeds," and of "putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image* of Him that created him." To be regenerated, then, is to be spiritually renewed or re-created "*after the image*" of our Maker. And what is it thus to be renewed after the Divine image, but to have the heart's natural love of self supplanted by a pure and disinterested love of the neighbor, resembling in some measure the nature of the Divine Love?—the understanding swept of its false persuasions, and illumined with a wisdom which, coming from Above, bears some resemblance to the Divine Wisdom?—and this heavenly love in the heart and heavenly wisdom in the head, going forth in the daily life, and outworking themselves in all sweet and gentle charities, in all noble and praiseworthy deeds? Surely you will admit that one who has experienced such an inward renewal, has been born again—born from Above—and has become a true child of the Heavenly Father. And if every such soul has been renewed "*after the image of Him that created him,*" how can any one deny or doubt that the nature of the Divine Trinity is just such as I have explained?—not a trin-

ity of *persons*, as the Old and popular theology affirms, but one consisting of the three great *essentials* in the Divine Being—Love, Wisdom, and Operation—corresponding to will, understanding and action with man, or to heat, light and their proceeding operation with the sun ?

See, now, the practical tendency of this new doctrine of the Trinity. It settles at once and forever, in the most convincing manner and upon an immovable basis, the question in regard to man's salvation, whether it be by faith, charity, or works ; for it shows us that it is only when *these three exist together* in man—viz : truth or faith in the understanding, love or charity in the will, and an activity directed towards good works as the ultimate form of charity and faith—that he is really an image of his Maker ; and until we are renewed after the Divine image, we are not truly and fully saved. It shows us that the *head*, and *heart*, and *hand*, are all needful, all concerned in the work of salvation, and should all act together *as one* ;—that since man is gifted with an understanding, a will, and an ability to do, it was meant that he should be a *believer*, a *lover*, and a *doer* ; or that he should *understand*, *will* and *obey* the laws of his spirit's life. The tendency of this doctrine, therefore, is to incite us to the honest and faithful exercise of all our faculties. It shows us that the intellect should be exercised in the acquisition of truth and the elimination of error ; that the will should be exercised in the resistance of selfish and evil dispositions, and the cultivation of those that are generous, charitable and God-like ; and that our human liberty, or

ability to do, should be exercised in the actual performance of noble, righteous and manly deeds—of *works* that are well-pleasing to Him who loveth righteousness, and rewardeth every man according to his works. Every one's works are but the ultimations of the things belonging to his will and understanding; therefore, be their outward form whatever it may, when viewed internally, their true quality is seen to be such as is the love and the faith thence derived, from which the works have proceeded; and this is why every one is finally to be judged and rewarded according to his works.

While, therefore, this new doctrine of the Trinity encourages the freest and most faithful exercise of the understanding in the acquisition of a pure and well-grounded faith, it at the same time shows us that *mere* faith or belief, however strong and well-sustained, or truth *alone*, however ample its store or pure its quality, is insufficient to save any one;—that we are really saved only in the degree that the heart's natural selfishness is overcome, and we are brought into a state to love what in itself is just, sincere, and right—to love, indeed, what God loves, and to find delight in doing what He loves to have us do. And it may further be seen, in the light of this heavenly doctrine, that our faith and charity are mere abstractions—that they have no foundation, and therefore cannot abide, unless they be ultimated in *works* or deeds of charity. Its tendency, therefore, is to make us *doers*, as well as *learners*, of the truth, and to prevent us from being satisfied with our spiritual condition, until, through

obedience to the truth, we have reached that state in which we love to obey, and experience a positive delight in the performance of good uses from a genuine love of use ; for then only, as it is plain to see, are we renewed in the image of our Maker, having within us an image of the trinity that is in Him.

And because we see that this trinity in ourselves, of love, wisdom and use, or charity, faith and works, derives its origin from a trinity of a corresponding nature in God, therefore the tendency of the doctrine is to produce in us a becoming humility. Seeing that our love, and wisdom and power, are not our own, but are every moment received from Him who is Love itself, and Wisdom itself, and Power itself, we shall claim no merit to ourselves on account of our love, knowledge or good works ; but shall be led from the heart to ascribe all the honor and all the glory unto the Lord alone. What shall we say, then, of a doctrine, whose legitimate and strong tendency it is to make men more wise, more loving, more active in the performance of good works, and at the same time more truly humble ? *Can* such a doctrine be false ? “ *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*”

This new doctrine, too, reconciles the apparent discrepancies in the Bible in regard to the means of salvation. It shows us that charity, faith and works are each indispensable, though charity is to be regarded as the prime essential, and without which our faith and works have no vitality. And because faith is necessary, therefore it is sometimes spoken of as if sal-



vation were by faith *alone*. But inasmuch as a state of love or charity is the heavenly state, therefore it is that *charity* is sometimes spoken of as greater than all other virtues ; and he that *loveth* is said to dwell in God, and God in him. But as charity and faith are nothing, or mere abstractions, save as they are embodied in some form, or ultimated in works, therefore *works* are sometimes spoken of in the Scripture as the criterion by which every one is to be finally judged, as if we were saved by works alone. Therefore the saying of each of the Apostles is true—that “ *love* is the fulfilling of the law ;” yet “ without *faith*, it is impossible to please God ;” but “ faith without *works* is dead.” Accordingly, the Lord Himself says : “ Whosoever, therefore, heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” Hearing and *doing* the Lord’s words, then, is the only way to build our spiritual house upon a firm and enduring basis ; and what more or less is implied in this, than understanding, willing and obeying the divine precepts ?

Again I must beg you to pardon the great length of my letter, which I can only hope that the importance of the subject may in some measure justify. But it still remains for me to show how those passages in the New Testament which speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and upon which the popular doctrine of

the Trinity is based, are to be explained consistently with the view I advocate ; and to the explanation of this, my next letter will be mainly devoted. Meanwhile I remain

Truly your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARRETT.

*Orange, Sept. 27, 1859.*

## LETTER VI.

SCRIPTURE CONFIRMATION—MEANING OF FATHER  
AND SON.

MY DEAR SIR:—I have, in my previous letters, explained the nature of the Divine Trinity as I understand it, and exhibited the practical importance of this doctrine. I have shown that the Bible represents God as a Being of Love, Wisdom, and Power ; and that these three elements, however they may be thought of and discoursed upon separately, have not, and cannot have, really any separate existence. They can only exist in union with each other, like heat, light, and their proceeding operation with the sun, or like the heart and lungs in man, and their mutual and reciprocal action. I have also shown that this view of the Divine Trinity relieves the subject of the difficulties with which the Old and popular doctrine is confessedly embarrassed, particularly that arising from the express declaration of Scripture, that “ God made man in his own image.” I do not see how it is possible fairly to reconcile this language of the Bible with the doctrine of three *persons* in the Godhead. Whatever be the nature of the trinal distinction in God, we certainly have Scripture warrant for insisting that an image or analogue of that trinity shall be shown to

exist in every regenerate man. And we have seen how completely the New doctrine, such as I have presented, satisfies the demands of this Scripture ; for the essential constituents of every man are will, understanding, and ability to act ; and these, with a good man, being the will or love of what is good, the understanding or thought of what is true, and a life conformable thereto, constitute a perfect image of the Divine Trinity, and are indeed derived from it. As sure, therefore, as this trinity exists in man viewed as a spiritual being, so sure must there exist in God a trinity of like nature, else man was not made in the image of God. And I think it incumbent on all who hold any different doctrine of the Trinity, to show that their doctrine is one which finds its analogue in the human spirit. Will your doctrine of three *persons* in the Godhead bear to be subjected to this test? Will you be kind enough to tell us what are the three *persons* in one man, which represent, as in an image, your three *persons* in God?

I might have dwelt much longer than I have upon that trinal distinction in man which is held to be an image of the trinity in God. I might have shown that it is a distinction not only clear to common observation, and involved in the very terms of every civil code, but that it is one plainly implied on every page of Holy Scripture. The Bible every where addresses man as a being capable of understanding, willing, and doing, or of knowing, loving, and obeying. It reveals certain great and momentous truths, all of which address themselves to the intellect in the first instance.

It asks that these truths first be *believed*, and then *obeyed*. But *obedience* to a command clearly implies the *willing* and *doing* of that which is commanded. And does the Bible require anything more of a man than to *understand*, *will*, and *do* God's truth?—or to *learn*, *love*, and *keep* his commandments. Will you name a single text of Scripture that is addressed to any principle, faculty, or capability in the human soul, not obviously comprehended in the trine I have stated? *Can* you name one? This trine in man, then, belongs to his spiritual constitution ; and therefore it is always addressed by Him who created man and understands the soul's integral nature and wants. Must not a trine of a similar nature, then, belong to the very constitution of the Divine Being, if man was made in the image of God, as the Bible represents?—But I must omit much that might be said on this point, while I proceed to show how the Trinity brought to view in the New Testament under the formula of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," is to be explained consistently with the view I have presented.

That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are spoken of in Scripture in such a manner as clearly implies the most intimate relation between them, is a fact that no Christian pretends to deny. And that these three names *appear* to be used to designate three Beings or Persons, as distinct from each other as Peter, James and John, I have already admitted. And this apparent truth has been incorporated into the popular theology, and affirmed as a real and substantial verity. Not content with the language of the Bible, Christians

have unfortunately, through the introduction of the word *persons* into the symbols of the church, confirmed themselves in this appearance to such a degree, that they now suppose it to express the absolute truth. This was the mistake—a mistake committed many centuries ago by men as fallible as you or I. And I think you will find that nearly every error which has crept into the Christian church, has been introduced through a mistake precisely similar; for what error can you name which Christians have accepted for truth, that has not derived some support from the apparent or literal sense of the Bible? But the errors which, no doubt, were very innocently believed fifteen hundred years ago, ought not to be—cannot be—forever perpetuated in the Church. And this doctrine of three *persons* in the Godhead I regard as one of those errors, which the light of the Gospel as it now shines, ought to enable all Christians to see and reject.

We know that in the great volume of nature there are many *appearances* of truth which are quite different from the truth itself. Indeed, among the works of God the absolute truth seldom lies on the surface. It is only necessary to refer here, by way of illustration, to the *apparent* diurnal motion of the heavenly bodies, which we know is so different from the real truth,—though the world had to wait many centuries for a Copernicus to penetrate beyond the appearance and disclose the reality. And what more reasonable than to suppose, that in this as in other respects, the Word of God should bear some analogy to his works. I maintain that there is here a very close analogy.

I hold that the sensuous appearances of truth in the letter of Scripture, are often quite different from the real truth, which usually lies deeper than the surface, and is therefore concealed from the eye of the casual observer. And among these appearances I reckon that which forms the basis of the popular doctrine in regard to the Divine Trinity. While these three names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *appear* to be employed to designate three co-equal divine Persons, they really denote three essential elements in *one* divine Person. Do you say that this *apparent* truth is the *real* truth?—or that the mention of these three names, in the connection in which we find them, is proof positive that as many distinct Beings are referred to by them? This, I know, is the argument of the popular theology. But if the argument is to be accepted as a sound one, it will prove altogether too much; for we shall then be constrained to believe in as many divine Persons as there are names applied in Scripture to the Divine Being. And these, you know, are quite numerous. Thus He is called Jah, Jehovah, Jehovah of Hosts, Lord, God, Creator, Saviour, Redeemer, Former, Schaddai, the Holy One of Israel, King, Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, &c. These names—all referring to one and the same divine Being or Person—are used to denote different attributes or elements of his character, or the different relations in which He stands to different classes of people. Is it said that a plurality of Persons is indicated by the particle *and*, which couples Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? This cannot be admitted; for in Isaiah

(xlix. 7) it is written : "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy one," &c. : where it is clear that one and the same Being is referred to under each of these designations, though, in addition to the connecting particle *and*, we have the still stronger pronoun *his*.

What, then, are the elements, principles, or attributes in the Divine Being, which we find designated in the New Testament as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? What should they be but the three grand essentials which I have explained, in the one personal God—Love, Wisdom, and Operation? By the *Father* is signified the essential Divine Love, or the Lord in respect to this attribute. Divine Love is the all-begetting and all-protecting principle in human hearts. It is this which begets in us all heavenly dispositions and feelings, which provides them with their appropriate nourishment, and protects them against the malignant assaults of evil spirits. All that is of heaven in any human soul is actually begotten of the Divine Love, and actually protected, fed, and nourished by it. This Love, therefore, is essentially *paternal* in its nature; and hence the Lord, when spoken of with especial reference to His love, is called the heavenly Father.

By the *Son* is denoted the Divine Wisdom, or the Lord in respect to His wisdom. The Divine Wisdom is the Truth or Word, which the Scripture assures us was in the beginning with God, and is God. (See John i. 1.) "And the Word," it is said, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This *Logos*, Wisdom, or Word, is also declared to be "the Light of



men"—"the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (ib. 4, 9.) We never find the *Father* spoken of in the New Testament as the Truth, the Light, or the Word; simply because this designation is applied to the Lord with more especial reference to that other and supreme element of the Divine character—Love.

But Divine Wisdom proceeds or is sent forth from Divine Love, as thought proceeds from affection, or as light is sent forth from heat. Every thought, we know, is the offspring of some affection. It proceeds from—is begotten and born of—some love in the will. The love, therefore, is properly the *father* of the thought. We may know this to be the case, if we reflect upon the fact that men always *think* most about those things they *love* most. Without some love in the will, no thought could ever have birth in the intellect. So if you raise the heat in any material substance to a certain degree of intensity—and heat corresponds to love—it manifests itself to the eye in the form of light. Light, then, we say, proceeds or is sent forth from heat, and is begotten by it. So in the New Testament the *Son* is called "the only begotten of the *Father*," and is said to have "proceeded" and "come forth from" the Father, to have been "sent" by the Father, &c. The Divine Wisdom (signified by the *Son*) proceeds and goes forth from the Divine Love (signified by the *Father*), and forms one with it, as light proceeds from and forms one with the heat of the sun.

Light, too is the form in which heat manifests itself

to the bodily eye, just as thought is the form in which love manifests itself to the eye of the mind. For the nature or character of a man's prevailing thoughts, is a sure index of the quality of his dominant love. Thus, if he is thinking perpetually of himself, and studying the surest ways of advancing his own interests without any thought of the interests or welfare of others, this is evidence that his ruling love is altogether selfish. Our loves always come forth and reveal themselves in our thoughts—in the things of the intellect. Nor can we in any other way learn the quality of the love that rules within us, save by noticing the character of our predominant thought. The things of the will reveal themselves in those of the understanding. Thought is simply the form of affection. It therefore brings the affection forth to view—makes it manifest—reveals its quality—being the very image and likeness of it. So Divine Wisdom alone, or the very truth itself, brings the Divine Love forth to view. Hence the *Son* is said to bring forth and manifest the *Father*. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him"—literally, *hath brought Him forth to view*. The Son is also said to be the "image" of the Father; and our Lord, speaking as the Son of God, says; "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We can only *see*, that is, *understand* the nature of the Divine Love, as that Love is revealed to us through the medium of the Divine Wisdom. Thus it is ever the Son which "*shows*" us the Father.

Nor can we draw spiritually near to the Divine

Love, except through the instrumentality of the Divine Wisdom, or the Truths of the Word. That is, we cannot be brought into a state to experience the delights of God's pure love—cannot really know how rich and full of blessing that love is—cannot come to any just appreciation or perception of the nature of that Love, save through the medium of the Divine Wisdom or Word ; for it is the truths of the Word which show us what we are to shun and do in order that we may become receptive of the Divine Love, or may *come to* that Love ; and to come to that Love, is to have that Love come to us and make its abode in our hearts. Therefore it is said by the Son, speaking in the capacity of the very Truth itself, "No one cometh unto the Father but by me." What is the precise idea which the popular theology attaches to "coming unto the Father ?"

Moreover, the Divine Wisdom cannot exist separate from the Divine Love. The latter ever dwells in the former as heat dwells in light, or affection in thought. And heat, we know, is the great element of power in the sun. It is this chiefly which produces such wonderful effects in nature, or which imparts to light its vivifying power. It is this which loosens the earth from her icy fetters—which causes seeds to germinate and buds to expand—which decks creation in robes of beauty, and gives to every flower its fragrance. So Divine Love is the vital element in Divine Wisdom or Truth. It is this which imparts to Truth all its quickening and regenerating power. It is this—ever dwelling in the Truth as its life and

soul—which enables the Truth to accomplish its wondrous works. Without this living element, the Truth would be as powerless as light without heat. Hence it is written: “The Son can do nothing of himself but what He seeth the Father do.” “I can of mine own self do nothing.” “The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” If, agreeable to the popular theology, the Son were a second *person* in the Trinity, yet equal in every respect to the Father or first person, why should He be able to do nothing of himself? Why should He attribute all his works to the Father? Or how could the Father  *dwell in Him*, unless two *persons* can be conceived of as dwelling in one and the same form?

Again: The Son is spoken of in the New Testament as being gifted with the exclusive power of *judging*. “The Father,” it is said, “judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;”—“Hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.” And again, speaking as the Son, the Lord says: “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see,” &c. Now, why is it that the Father has nothing to do in so important a work as that of *judging* his intelligent creatures? Why is all judgment committed unto the Son? I know not what reply the Old theology would make to these questions; but in the light of the doctrine I am advocating, the answer is very plain. For is it not one of the appropriate offices of truth to *judge*? Is not this one great purpose for which the truth is given, and one of the first

things it does when it comes to human minds? Whenever we receive any truth, that truth immediately passes a judgment upon us—upon our character, conduct and former beliefs. It approves of whatever in our minds is in accordance with it, and condemns whatever is in opposition to it. Every judgment which we pass upon ourselves or others, if it be in accordance with the truth, is a just judgment; but if not in accordance with the truth, it is unjust. All the judgments, therefore, which men render, are true and righteous just in the degree that they accord with the truth. When, therefore, the truth comes to our minds, or when the Lord comes with the enlightening power of truth from Himself, He comes to reveal to us our real characters, and thus to execute a judgment. And so it is with every advent of truth. It always comes to judge men and things. This is why the *Son*, which signifies the Lord in respect to Wisdom or Truth, says: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see," &c.—showing that *enlightening* men, or enabling those hitherto blind to *see*, which we know is exclusively the office of truth, is really to execute a judgment. And this also shows us why "all judgment" is said to have been "committed unto the *Son*." And as if to leave no room for doubt on this point, the Lord says, on another occasion: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." It is the Lord's Word, therefore, which is to judge all men, and His "Word is truth." (John

xvii. 17.) This also explains why it is that the second coming of the Lord is uniformly spoken of as the coming of *the Son of man* to *judge* the world ; for the promised second coming of the Son of Man is the coming, as I believe, of the true meaning of the Word—the coming of the truth of its spiritual sense to the understandings and hearts of men ; and just in the degree that this coming takes place, a judgment is executed—a judgment upon men's characters or states as well as upon their previous views of truth. And do you not see that this judgment is even now going on ?—that the Son of Man is already coming in the clouds of heaven ?—that old things are passing away, and all things being made new, agreeable to the declarations of Holy Writ ?

Again : The Father is said to be *greater* than the Son. "My Father is greater than I," is a text which, according to your tri-personal doctrine, gives the Unitarian a decided advantage in the argument touching the divinity of Christ. For you and the Unitarian agree that the Father and the Son are two distinct persons. This admitted, what can be more fair and logical than the Unitarian's conclusion, that *one* of these persons is not divine in the strict or highest sense of that word—not divine in the sense in which the other is ; for proper divinity admits of no superiority. Yet here it is said, "My Father is greater than I." How do you reconcile this text with the idea of perfect equality between the first and second *persons* of your Trinity ? But, in the light of the doctrine I advocate, this text presents no difficulty. The *Father*

denotes that prime essential in the Divine Trinity from which the others proceed—viz : Love. And as Love is superior to Wisdom or Truth in point of dignity, power and importance, just as charity is superior to faith (for which we have Paul's authority), therefore the Father is said to be greater than the Son. Among spiritual principles there are gradations of rank and importance the same as among our bodily organs. And love—pure, devoted, unselfish love—is the highest and noblest attribute of humanity. This, therefore, is *greater* than truth, spiritually speaking—greater, indeed, than any other principle belonging to the human mind. Hence the reason and the meaning of the declaration, "My Father is greater than I."

Then we are taught that there is a most intimate union between the Father and Son—so intimate that they are said to be one. "I and my Father are one." How one? It is plain that if, according to the popular theology, they are two *persons*, they cannot be one *in person*. They can only be one in spirit or essence. And here, again, your tri-personal theory gives the Unitarian a decided advantage. For he agrees with you that the oneness predicated of the Father and Son is simply a oneness of spirit. All good men, he argues—all who have the heavenly Father's spirit—are said to be one with the Father, and one with each other, for they are one in spirit. Therefore—and how can you deny the logic of his conclusion?—Christ being one with the Father in precisely the same sense that all good men are one with Him, though in a much higher degree, is merely a good man—better, indeed,

than any other man—but not properly divine. But according to the view I am advocating, the Father and Son are one, both in *essence* and in *person*. They are one, as soul and body are one, as heat and light are one in the sun, or affection and thought in man. This kind of oneness answers fully the demands of all the language of Scripture, admits and even necessitates the absolute divinity of the Saviour, and is at the same time clear of the objection of being incomprehensible or mysterious.

And thus I might go on, multiplying texts of Scripture almost without number in which *Father* and *Son* are mentioned, and showing how easy of interpretation they all are, and what a clear, consistent and rational sense they yield, according to the view I advocate ; while, according to the Old and popular view, they are—some of them, at least—so hard to be understood, and embarrassed with so many and great difficulties. But I trust the examples I have here given will serve my purpose of illustration, and suffice to show you that the demands of the language in those passages of the New Testament to which the popular doctrine of the Trinity appeals for support, yield most readily to the doctrine I have here endeavored to unfold, and are most completely satisfied by it.

I had hoped to conclude, in the present letter, all I wished to say on the subject suggested by the paragraph in your sermon to which I object. But the true Scripture import of the Holy Spirit, and the facility with which the texts wherein it occurs yield to the view I have presented, are points of too great import-



ance in this discussion to be lightly touched upon. I must, therefore, postpone, till another time, the conclusion of my remarks, lest I weary you by the great length of this letter. Meanwhile I remain,

Your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARBETT.

*Orange, Oct. 28th, 1859.*

## LETTER VII.

FURTHER TESTIMONY FROM SCRIPTURE—MEANING OF  
THE HOLY SPIRIT—CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR SIR :—Having, in my letter of Oct. 28th, explained what I believe to be the true Scripture import of *Father* and *Son*, so often mentioned in the New Testament, I come now, agreeable to my promise, to show what is to be understood by the *Holy Spirit*. And I beg you carefully to note how much more fully the demands of the Scripture language in those passages which speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are satisfied by the doctrine of the Trinity such as I have explained, than by the popular *Tri-Personal* doctrine. Even if the New doctrine which I have endeavored to elucidate, should not, to your entire satisfaction, solve every doubt or remove every difficulty—though, for one, I do not see any difficulty which it fails fairly to meet—still, you should consider whether the difficulties which the New view has to encounter be not immeasurably less than those by which the Old is embarrassed. Please to note also the great advantage which the New view has over the Old in a practical point of view, as exhibited in my letter to you of September 27th.

The translators of our English Bible have done more, perhaps, than all others to impress the popular

mind of Christendom with the belief that the Holy Spirit, so often spoken of in the New Testament, is a distinct Person. And this they have done through a mis-translation of the Greek πνεῦμα ἁγίου (*Pneuma hagion*), which they have almost invariably rendered *Holy Ghost*. The common acceptance of the term *ghost*, is a *person*—though one that is not ordinarily visible. And as it was the confirmed belief of the translators of our Bible that there are three *Persons* in the Godhead, they undoubtedly endeavored to make their translation conform to this idea; and accordingly they pretty uniformly translated *Pneuma Hagion*, “*Holy Ghost*.” But you and every other Greek scholar know perfectly well that *Pneuma* is mis-translated when translated by a word which conveys the idea of a distinct person. The word never has any such meaning. Its primary signification is a *breathing*, or *effluence*,—some principle, power, or influence sent forth *from* a person. Hence we read that our Lord, when He appeared to his disciples after his crucifixion, “*breathed* on them” and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,”—Holy Ghost, as erroneously rendered in our common English version (John xx. 22). Besides, we read (John xiv. 15, 16, 17), “If ye love me keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even *the Spirit of Truth* which the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” And further on, in this same chapter, we read: “But the Comforter, which is the

Holy Spirit [Holy *Ghost* in our common version], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (v. 26). Observe that in one of these passages the *Comforter* is said to be "the Holy Spirit," and in the other "the Spirit of Truth"—thus teaching that the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth are identically the same. Moreover we find the Greek words *Pneuma Hagion*, commonly rendered *Holy Ghost*, translated *Holy Spirit* in a very few instances. Thus in Luke xi. 13, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit (*Pneuma Hagion*) to them that ask Him?" And Paul says to the Ephesian brethren, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (iv. 30). And again, writing to the church at Thessalonica, the same Apostle says: "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit" (iv. 8). Now in each of these passages the words translated *Holy Spirit* are precisely the same as those elsewhere and commonly translated *Holy Ghost*.

But it is needless to urge this point. For you, I am certain, will concede that the words usually rendered *Holy Ghost* in the New Testament, ought always to be translated *Holy Spirit*. And the Holy Spirit, I maintain, is not a Divine *Person*, but a holy *effluence* emanating from the Divine Being, or the holy proceeding influence and joint operation of the Divine Love

and Wisdom upon the minds and hearts of men, corresponding to the effluent heat and light of the sun, and their operation throughout the domains of nature.

But while the effluent beams of the sun, and their quickening power in the natural sphere, furnish a good illustration of my idea of the Holy Spirit, I may, perhaps, illustrate the idea still better by a reference to human thoughts and affections, and their outgoings and influence in the realms of spirit. I believe—nay, I am very confident—that thoughts and affections have extension. I mean by this, that there is a mental sphere appertaining to every human being, as truly as there is a material sphere appertaining to the earths in the universe, and to every material object belonging to the earths. This mental sphere differs in quality, power, and intensity, with different individuals, according as their minds differ in intellectual grasp, moral quality, and depth and intensity of feeling. This mental or human sphere is the extension, so to speak, of the individual himself, and is therefore of the same quality as his thoughts and affections, just as the sphere of a rose is of the same nature as the rose itself, being the effluence of its own essential qualities. According to this view, a good and regenerate person, one whose soul is filled and animated with the Lord's own life, being re-created in His image and likeness, not only scatters blessings wherever he goes by his words of wisdom and his deeds of love, but his very presence is a benediction. There is a power in his heavenly thoughts and pure affections, which makes itself felt even though he open not his mouth. Every

unholy passion, every sinful desire and disposition, feels itself rebuked by his presence ; while all the purest and best feelings of the heart are called forth and quickened into activity. A pure and holy influence goes forth from him at all times like fragrance from a garden of flowers. And all who come within the sphere of his influence, have their minds and hearts affected by it. Their evils are subdued and their good desires and feelings are quickened by his very presence. No doubt you have known some such saintly persons, who seemed not only to dwell in an atmosphere of holiness and love, but to carry that atmosphere with them, and diffuse it like a pure and heavenly radiance wherever they go. Such persons, you would say, are images and likenesses of the Lord. Then may we not learn from the sweet and holy influence that goes forth from them—from that truly human sphere of affection and thought which everywhere goes with them as the atmosphere with the earth, or the fragrance with the flower—may we not learn, I say, from the spirit which goes forth from such persons, the nature of that effluence from the Divine Being called in Scripture “the Holy Spirit?” Is not one the image of the other, as truly as any quality or attribute of the finite human mind can be an image of a like quality or attribute of the Infinite Divine Mind? If so, then the Holy Spirit, you see, is not a Divine *Person*, according to the teaching of the popular theology, but a holy effluence or breathing from the Divine. And now let us see how this view accords

with the language and teaching of the New Testament on the subject.

First, you will observe that it answers perfectly the demands of the original Greek term (*pneuma hagion*) for Holy Spirit, which means simply a holy *breathing* or *effluence*; while the old and popular idea of the Holy Spirit as a distinct Person, is wholly unauthorized by the original. This alone ought to settle the question so far as the testimony of Scripture is concerned. But, with the hope of removing from your mind every shadow of doubt on this subject, I would invite your attention to some of the things predicated of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

For example, we read of certain persons being *filled* with the Holy Spirit. It was announced by the angel Gabriel before the birth of John, that he should be "*filled* with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke i. 15); and after his birth, "his father Zacharias was *filled* with the Holy Spirit and prophesied" (ib. v. 67). Paul was "*filled* with the Holy Spirit." Barnabas, also, "was a good man, and *full* of the Holy Spirit and of faith." "And the disciples were *filled* with joy and with the Holy Spirit." (Acts xi. 24; xiii. 9, 52.) And when the disciples were assembled on the day of Pentecost, "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," it is said immediately after, that, "they were all *filled* with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts ii. 4.) And we are afterwards told that "this is that which was spoken

by the prophet Joel : And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," etc. (ib. v. 17.) This shows us what it is to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. It is to have God's spirit *poured out* upon the mind and heart—to have the soul flooded as it were with the Divine Wisdom and Love. If the Holy Spirit were a *person* instead of an *effluence*, would it not seem a most singular and unwarrantable use of language to speak of its being *poured out*? But we may with perfect propriety speak of thoughts and feelings being *poured out*. The earnest out-goings of the soul in any direction, may, with the strictest propriety, be called the *out-pourings* of the soul. Thus men may *pour out* their souls in prayer, or in deeds of kindness and mercy, or on the written page which embodies their thoughts and affections. So, too, when the mind is thoroughly pervaded by certain sentiments, affections, or feelings, the man is very properly said to be *filled* with them. Thus men are said to be full of faith, love, hope, charity, meekness, mercy, etc. And you will observe in one of the above quotations from the Acts of the Apostles, that the same thing is predicated of the Holy Spirit as of *faith* ; and in another of them, the same as of *joy* ;—" full of the Holy Spirit *and* of faith ;" " filled with joy *and* with the Holy Spirit." It is also said in another passage to which I have already referred, that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete or Comforter, called also " the Spirit of truth," " dwelleth with you, *and shall be in you.*" (John xiv. 17.) Now while I may be greatly influenced by your



mental sphere—while the thoughts and affections radiating from you, may kindle in my soul similar thoughts and affections, and in that case, or on account of the similarity of the impulses by which we are swayed, your spirit might be said to be *in me*, I submit that it could not with truth or propriety be said that your *person* was in me—though I concede, of course, that no such influence or spirit could go forth *from* you, if you did not exist as a person.

Then we find the Holy Spirit spoken of as something that men may *receive*. Jesus “breathed on his disciples and said unto them, *Receive* ye the Holy Spirit.” (John xx. 22.) “They *received* the Holy Spirit” through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands. (Acts viii. 17.) “Have ye *received* the Holy Spirit?” inquired Paul of certain of the disciples at Ephesus. The Holy Spirit is also said to *fall* on men (Acts x. 44; xi. 15); to *come* upon them (ib. i. 8); to be *given* to them (Luke xi. 13; Acts viii. 18; 1. Thess. iv. 8); to be *sent down* from Heaven (1 Pet. i. 12); to be a *witness* of heavenly states (Heb. x. 15.) And men are said to be made *partakers* of the Holy Spirit (Heb. vi. 4), as they are made *partakers* of spiritual things (Rom. xv. 27), or of “that one bread,” which, coming down from heaven, giveth life unto the world. (1 Cor. x. 17.)

Now, I ask in all seriousness, if the things here predicated of the Holy Spirit are generally such as could, without a most flagrant violation of the laws of language, be predicated of a *person* whether divine or human? Could it, with any propriety, be said of a

*person* that he was *poured out* upon others?—that others were *filled* with him?—that he was *communicated* to them, or that they *received* him internally through the imposition of hands?—or that others could be made *partakers* of him? But this, and all other language in the New Testament used in reference to the Holy Spirit, becomes easy of interpretation, and is seen to be perfectly proper, if we understand the Holy Spirit to be not a *person* but an *effluence*—or that Divine and Holy Proceeding of love and wisdom from the Lord, corresponding to the natural proceeding of heat and light from the sun, and their operation throughout the domains of nature.

See, now, how easy of interpretation, and how beautifully significant, according to the views of the Divine Trinity here presented, becomes that baptismal formula used in all Christian churches, and which the Lord gave to his disciples after the Human had been glorified, and had received “all power in heaven and on earth!” In the formula referred to, He commands his followers to go and make disciples of all nations, “baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism, as you know, is a symbolic rite, and signifies regeneration, or the purification of the heart from its defilements by means of Divine truth symbolized by the water of baptism; for divine truth is spiritual water—the water of life. The *name* of any one mentioned in Scripture, signifies some mental or spiritual quality. Therefore, by the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is denoted

the quality of the Divine Trinity ; that is, the quality of Love, Wisdom, and their Holy Proceeding. And to be *baptized into this name*, according to the spiritual import of the expression, is to be spiritually re-created—made altogether new in our feelings, thoughts, and actions. In other words, it is to have our human will purified, or brought into conformity with the Divine Love ; our understanding enlightened, or brought into conformity with the Divine Wisdom ; and our human life-sphere brought into conformity with the Holy Proceeding of love and wisdom, or the sphere of the Divine beneficence. When a man's will becomes imbued with genuine love, and his understanding imbued with genuine truth, then his sphere of life is of a quality similar to that which proceeds from the Lord, which is called his Holy Proceeding. He is then created anew in the image and likeness of the Lord, having derivatively, in himself, in a finite degree, each element of the Divine Trinity, love, wisdom, and use, or charity, faith, and good works in harmonious union. Thus he is spiritually baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; and this is what is symbolized by the ordinance of baptism. In the light of the Old and popular doctrine of the Trinity does the formula used in this rite disclose any such beautiful significance ? \*

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\* An objection to the view of the Trinity as presented in these Letters, is sometimes urged by the advocates of the Old and popular doctrine, on the ground that the *personal* pronoun *He* is uniformly applied alike to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But all who fully understand our doctrine, will see that this objection is without weight. For each of these terms is applied to one and the same

You will perceive from all I have said on this subject, that, while I hold to a trinal distinction in the Deity, I reject the old and popular doctrine which requires us to believe in a *tri-personal* God. I regard that doctrine as alike unreasonable and unscriptural, and most unfriendly to the growth of pure religion and practical piety. I cannot, in my own mind, separate the belief or thought of three persons in the Godhead, from the belief or thought of three Gods; nor do I believe it possible for any one to do this. Candor requires of me—and I think it requires of all—to say, that Tri-personalism is in reality Tritheism—unless (as I have no doubt is often the case) one of the persons in this Trinity is held to be supreme above the others. But a denial of the perfect *equality* of the persons, is a virtual denial of the *divinity* of those that are held subordinate. And how many among Trinitarians of the present century, clearly perceiving this logical necessity, have sought an escape from the sad dilemma in modern Unitarianism!

But *who* is the uni-personal God in whom I believe? you are, no doubt, ready to ask. Who should He be, but the Lord Jesus Christ? He, I maintain, is the only *personal* God revealed unto men. He is the

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Divine Being or Person—the *Father* being the usual designation when He is spoken of with reference to the Divine Love; the *Son*, when He is spoken of with reference to the Divine Wisdom or Word; and the *Holy Spirit*, when He is spoken of with reference to the Divine Power or Holy Proceeding. Love has no abstract or *impersonal* existence—neither has Truth nor Power. Therefore, in the literal sense of the Scripture, *personality* is ascribed to each, and the *personal* pronoun is accordingly employed.

manifested Jehovah—"God with us." In Him is all of that Divine Trinity signified by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For does not Paul declare that "in Him dwelleth *all the fullness* of the Godhead bodily?" And if this be so, how can we deny or doubt, that, whatever be the nature of the Divine Trinity, the *all* of that Trinity dwells in the person of Jesus Christ? Is there aught of Divinity which human minds can receive or comprehend, that dwells *not* in the glorified Christ? He is revealed to us as the Light of the world—the very truth itself—the power of God and the wisdom of God—the eternal Logos or Word made flesh—the personal manifestation of the Divine Love and Wisdom—the fulness of God revealed in a bodily form—the Everlasting Father brought forth to the view of mortals; so that He himself could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

His language, too, is the language of God. "If any man thirst," He says, "let him come to *me* and drink." "Come unto *me* all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." "I am the Good Shepherd—the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "Without me ye can do nothing." "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches." "I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven." "Upon this rock *I* will build *my* church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And *I* will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Who but God himself

could, without the most terrible presumption, use language like this?

And his works likewise, are the works of God. With five loaves and a few small fishes He feeds the hungry thousands, and they are all filled. To a certain blind man who sits by the way-side and cries, saying, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me," He says, "Receive thy sight," and immediately his sight is restored. To the poor paralytic who is brought to Him lying on a bed, He says, "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house." He comes and touches the bier that bears the dead body of the only son of the widow of Nain, and says "Young man, I say unto thee arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak." He touches the hand of a poor fever-stricken woman, and instantly the fever leaves her. He speaks the word in behalf of the centurion's palsied servant, who lay at home grievously tormented, and "his servant was healed in the self-same hour." Many are brought unto Him possessed with devils, "and he cast out the spirits with his word." A great tempest arises in the sea, so that the ship is covered with the waves; and his disciples, filled with fear, cry, "Lord, save us—we perish: then He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea; and there was a great calm."

*Whose love—whose word—whose power is this, that feeds the hungering thousands in the wilderness, that heals the sick, gives sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, makes vigorous and strong the palsied limbs,*

raises the dead to life, casts out devils from souls possessed, and stills the raging winds and waves? Can any one doubt that He, who is able to do all this, "is the true God and eternal life?" Add also the revealed fact, that hosts of adoring angels bow before His throne, "saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Who else, then, save the Lord Jesus Christ, should receive the supreme homage of our hearts? To what other Divine Person shall we look, of what other shall we think, when we bow our souls in prayer? If "God was *in* Christ reconciling the world unto himself"—which I take to be the true Christian idea—then should Christians worship God *in* Christ, and not *out of* Him. We should worship the Father *in* the Son—the Divinity *in* the Humanity. Nor need we fear to worship Him whom the angels adore; nor doubt that, in doing this, we worship the all of that Divine Trinity signified by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

But it is needless to urge this point with *you*, my brother, most essential though I deem it to be. For you believe already that Christ is the manifested God—the true and proper Object of religious worship. For in the sermon of yours which was the immediate occasion of these Letters, you say: "As far as human conception is concerned, there is nothing of the Spirit or the Father, but that which was revealed to us by the manifest Christ Jesus." "And I believe that one

of the greatest elements of power is utterly cast away and lost, when Christ is regarded as a messenger *from* God, and not as God Himself manifest in the flesh." And in the same discourse you further declare your belief in Christ as "the Way, the Life, the Alpha, the Omega, the First, the Last;" and after acknowledging your obligation to "give to Him all that the human soul can give to any being," you add: "When I have fulfilled all the acts of trust, of love, of reverence, of worship, of adoration and ecstasy, that are commanded toward the Lord Jesus Christ, I have exhausted the possibilities of my mind; I have nothing higher to offer before any other throne." And in a more recent sermon of yours, (published Nov. 17th,) you express your joy in the belief that "Christ is God," and remark, that "it is by the *personal* power of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the hearts of His children, that He works all goodness in them." You also say: "The Bible teaches just this: that the *Divine Mind was pleased to take upon itself a human body.*" "I never bless God so much as when I think that He came into the world to search for me and save me." And you further add:

"They that worship God as a mere Spirit, worship under the most difficult circumstances in which it is possible for the human mind to worship. It is the Scriptural remedy to worship the Father through [*in*] Christ. And they that worship Christ as very God, are enabled to worship under circumstances which make it very easy. For Christ is God present to us in such a way that our senses our reason, and our affections, are able to take a personal hold upon him. It is just the differ-



ence between a God afar off and a God near at hand ; between a God that the heart can reach, and by its common sympathies understand and interpret, and a God which only the head and imagination can at all reach or descry—and even these only as astronomers' glasses descry nebulous worlds at so vast a distance, that the highest powers cannot resolve them, or make them less than mere luminous mist. If you worship Christ, you employ your powers easily and naturally."

Upon this point, then—the proper and absolute divinity of Christ, your language is sufficiently explicit. I have no fault to find with you here. Your view appears to be identical with my own. But if Christ be indeed "very God," as you here affirm and I admit, and if, as you have elsewhere said, "no man can form any conception of God except as a *person*," and "it is not in the power of any human being to think of a person except in some *form*" (see your sermon on understanding God), I cannot help asking how it is possible for you to separate in your own mind the belief in three Divine *Persons*, having a "three-fold personality" clearly defined, from a belief in three *Gods*? To declare yourself able to do this, is simply to say that you can think of *three* distinct persons, each of whom is in the human form, and at the same time think of them collectively as only *one* person existing in one human form! Are you able to do this?

You will not, of course, understand me as believing or teaching that the Divine dwelt in all fulness in Jesus Christ while He tabernacled in human flesh. God, in descending to human conditions, or assuming

our natural humanity, assumed it with all its finiteness, imperfections and hereditary corruptions. Otherwise He could not have been subject to temptation as He was. And he gradually brought down his Divinity into every region of the assumed humanity—cleansed that humanity of all its impurities—subjected all its dispositions and feelings to the governance of Divine Wisdom—conquered all the bells and reduced them to order—“fulfilled” perfectly all the Law and the Prophets—*lived out* the Divine Truth, and thereby united it to the Divine Good or Love in the ultimate sphere ; and in this way He glorified the humanity, or made it divine even to the very ultimates. Accordingly we read that He *increased* in wisdom, (Luke ii. 52), and that He *sanctified* himself (John xvii. 19), that his followers also might be sanctified through the truth. And until that process of glorification (of which the regeneration of every man is an image) was complete, it could not be said of Christ that He was divine even to ultimates ; neither could that holy effluence proceed from Him, which He was able to shed down upon the hearts of men *after* it was “finished,” and the human was made altogether divine. Hence He spake of the necessity of his going away (from the outward view of the disciples) in order that He might send them the Comforter, or Holy Spirit. “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send him unto you.” (John xvi. 7.) Hence also it is said on another occasion, “But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe in Him *should* receive ; for the Holy

Spirit *was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*" (John vii. 39.) Not that the Holy Spirit did not exist *absolutely*, as one element of the Divine Trinity, prior to the Incarnation; but that special dispensation of the Spirit which the Church now enjoys and which came as a consequence of the assumption and glorification of the humanity—that divine influence which the Lord is now able to impart unto and make operative in the lowest or ultimate sphere of humanity, (because He united the Divine Wisdom with the Divine Love in that sphere.) could not be imparted *before*, because of the closed condition of the human mind;—and therefore, *relatively* speaking, "it was not." That closed, lost and ruined degree of the mind, which was opened, sanctified and redeemed through the Incarnation, has ever since been capable of receiving the healing influences of the Spirit.

But it is time to bring my remarks to a close. I had no idea, when I first took up my pen, of writing half as much as I have written. But you will, I trust, pardon both the number and length of my letters, in view of the magnitude and importance of the theme. The doctrine which I have aimed to discuss, is a central doctrine of our religion—has been generally so regarded by Christians from the earliest period of the church. A wrong idea of this subject—an erroneous view of the nature of the Divine Trinity—must affect disastrously our views on other subjects. Indeed our whole system of theology, so

far as its various parts cohere together, will of necessity be moulded into conformity with our doctrine concerning the Lord, and concerning the nature of the trinity in Him. You must yourself perceive, that if the doctrine of the Trinity as set forth in my letters be true, it must, when received, modify very essentially the Old and popular doctrine of the Atonement, and our views of the nature and plan of redemption—in short, our whole system of doctrinal theology. How important, then, that we suffer not ourselves to remain in error upon a subject so central and momentous as this!

And especially, my brother, does it seem important that *you* of all others should believe right and teach right on a point so fundamental. Your views are scattered over the land—I might say, over the world—with rail-road speed. *You* are teaching the teachers. Your splendid rhetoric, added to your deserved reputation for earnestness, independence, piety and zeal, gives tremendous weight to all you say. Multitudes, no doubt, of whom you never heard—and among them, hundreds of Christian ministers—accept whatever views you present, almost without questioning. Pray God, my brother, that no instruction of yours may lead these multitudes astray upon a subject of such magnitude as the one before us.

Already you are doing a noble work—a work, I verily believe, over which the angels in heaven rejoice. You are breaking down the high walls of partition which have too long separated good and holy men, and rebuking the mean, narrow, and mischievous spirit

of sect, in a way that, I doubt not, is well pleasing to the Lord. You are removing many obstructions to the free course of truth and the upbuilding of the Redeemer's kingdom here on earth. But there is a nobler work still, which you may perform for the Master's cause. You may, if you will, do much to eradicate from the minds of Christians, that central error of the popular theology—for so I cannot but regard it—of three *persons* in the Godhead. And the only way you can successfully do this (unless you adopt the Unitarian view, which I think you are not likely to do,) is, by teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only* personal God revealed to men, and therefore the only proper Object of religious worship. Leave out, I entreat you, of your own thought of God, and teach your numerous hearers and readers to leave out of theirs, all idea of any *other* Divine Person, revealed or *to be* revealed either here or hereafter. Why not do this? If Jesus Christ be “very God,” why cherish for a moment the idea—alike repugnant to reason and Scripture—that there is any *other* God? Why encourage your Christian brethren in the belief or thought of any other? Why talk as if there might arise before your “clarified vision” in the great Hereafter, “in *equal* proportions of majesty the then revealed Father and Holy Spirit?”—two other Divine Persons. Why not boldly declare—since this is the plain New Testament doctrine—that the Father *is already* revealed in the person of Christ? for He came to bring the Father forth to view; and that the Holy Spirit is an effluence, a power, a special dispensation

*from* the glorified Saviour—a dispensation which He himself promised before his crucifixion? For did He not say to his disciples, “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter [‘which is the Holy Spirit’] will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.” (John xvi. 7.) If you believe that “it is the very God that beams out from Christ,” why suffer a man-invented creed, how venerable soever it may be, to stand for a moment in your way, or prevent you from proclaiming the simple Gospel truth, that looking to Christ is looking to God—that obedience to Christ is obedience to God—that the worship of Christ is the worship of God—that the love of Christ is the love of God—that the spirit of Christ is the spirit of God—that the advent of Christ is the advent of God—and that the three prime essentials of Divinity, expressed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, exist together *in* Christ, as will, understanding and action, or soul, body and proceeding operation, exist together in one man? This is, as I believe, the great Christian Doctrine—central in respect to all other doctrines as the sun is central in our planetary system.

The Divine Trinity, as I have explained it, is a doctrine at once simple, intelligible and rational. Philosophy assents to it; enlightened reason accepts it; the analogies of nature affirm it; man, created in the image of his Maker, furnishes a complete example and illustration of it; and to all this, God’s own Word comes and adds its clear and indubitable testimony. And when we view this Trinity as existing in the one

person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and connect with it the other great truths involved in the Divine Incarnation and the wondrous works whereby the Humanity was glorified and Divinity brought down into human conditions and relations, we have a doctrine of tremendous power—the doctrine of the Divine Humanity. In the light of this grand and glorious truth, we see that Christianity is nothing without Christ himself;—that He is its central Luminary, its vital force, its ever present and living power;—that its truths were empty and dead, unless filled and vitalized by his own loving Spirit;—that repentance, reformation, and regeneration, were all impossible without Him; that it is his spirit—his life—his power alone—that can drive back the foul malignity of the hells, and redeem humanity from their terrible infestations; that He is the ever-living and ever-present Redeemer and Saviour. And since the truth of this great doctrine needs to be seen and acknowledged before its mighty power over the heart can be experienced or its regenerating efficacy be seen and felt, therefore am I most anxious to have it proclaimed from every Christian pulpit. But the least intimation or thought of the existence of any *other* Divine Person than Christ, cannot but distract the mind of the worshiper, and greatly weaken, if it does not utterly destroy the power of this great truth.

I cannot conclude without acknowledging my indebtedness to the illumined Swedenborg, for the view of the Trinity here presented, and commending his profound and luminous works on theology as worthy

the earnest and devout study of every Christian—and especially of every Christian minister.

Pardon the freedom with which I have written ; consider well the importance of a correct view of this vital question ; forget not your own obligation to rise above the influence of sect and creed ; be willing to stand by God's truth, however you may be forsaken by men for so doing ; examine well and prayerfully the doctrine of the Trinity which my letters have aimed to unfold and illustrate ; and believe me,

Truly your Friend and Brother,

B. F. BARRETT.

*Orange, Dec. 6th, 1859.*





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241



248

